

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.]

[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.]

No. 227.—VOL. IX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 14, 1867.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE RIDE TO OAKSHAW.]

A LIFE AT STAKE.

BY LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER XXIII.

You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.

Coleridge.

Upon the morning subsequent to the arrival of Miss Chellis at Monrepos Adah devoted herself to her guest, narrating to her the history of her guardian's persecutions, and detailing the many circumstances that led to her singular marriage. With downcast eyes and the burning flush of maidenly shame upon her clear cheeks, she told the whole story of her first encounter with Sir Hugh, of her proposition to him, and of the manner in which she had discharged her pecuniary obligations to him. She spoke as frankly as she would have done to her mother, had her mother lived, seeming to derive comfort from womanly sympathy, and the little old lady listened to her with kindling face and sparkling eyes, frequently interrupting her with praises for her spirit and courage, or with energetic and caustic remarks against Mr. Wilmer.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the keen-eyed spinster was charmed with her grand-nephew's bride. Lady Chellis's superb and stately beauty, her modesty and sensibility, her tender respect for her antiquated guest, her merciful treatment of her baffled guardian, even her decided refusal ever to see the husband she had so strangely won, all conspired to invest her with a romantic halo in the mind of Miss Chellis, whose heart was drawn towards her at once in love and admiration.

"To think I should have been such a mole all these years," ejaculated the elfin-faced spinster, in tones expressive of disgust at her own blindness. "I've known everything that has transpired within twenty miles of Hawk's Nest, even to the number of gowns the rector's wife had in a year, and I've bothered my brains about Paris fashions with which

to civilize the heathen, and all this time you were shut up by that sinner with no one to look after you. Dear, dear, I wonder I never thought or guessed the truth. Thank heaven, it was Hugh you encountered on that night. I shudder to think whose hands you might have fallen into. If you had not been protected by a merciful Providence, Adah, you would have been to-day the most unhappy woman in the world."

Adah smiled brightly in the withered face of the little old lady, and pressed her tiny wrinkled hand, upon one finger of which sparkled the diamond ring that had been the token of Miss Dorothy's betrothal more than half a century before.

Her liquid black eyes had in them a look that the spinster had known and loved in other eyes long ago, and Miss Dorothy, with a sudden and strange tenderness, bent forward, impressed a kiss and let fall a tear upon the fair forehead.

"He looked as you do now," she murmured. "You might have been his daughter instead of grand-niece. Henceforth, Adah, you shall be as a daughter to me for his sake, as well as your own."

She sighed softly, still gazing upon the bright, sweet face of Sir Hugh's young bride, her memory recalling lineaments very like those she looked upon, yet indicative of manly spirit and manly strength. Then the keenness of her eyes was dimmed by sudden tears, and she bowed her head upon the golden top of her cane.

Lady Chellis arose softly and stole from the room, leaving the old spinster lost in a deep and mournful reverie, in which she lived over again her vanished youth, and her heart thrilled to the remembered music of her dead lover's voice.

Adah passed into the corridor, and encountered Watkins, the ex-steward of the late admiral, almost at the very door of the drawing-room. He carried in his hands a salver upon which reposed a letter, which he hastened to present to his young mistress.

Lady Chellis received the missive, perceived by the address that it was from Captain Heddell, and engaged at once in its perusal.

Its contents were brief, for the old sailor's forte

was not in handling the pen, and to the effect that Mr. Wilmer and Mrs. Barrat had quitted the town house the day before, and gone he knew not whither. The house was closed, and the keys in his possession. The servants, as her ladyship was aware, had been sent to her country home. He concluded with tendering his services whenever they should be required, and added that he should hold himself in readiness to answer her summons at a moment's notice.

Putting the letter in her pocket, Adah returned to the drawing-room, where she found Miss Chellis apparently asleep in her arm-chair. Fearful of disturbing her, she stole out again, donned her hat, and set out for the grove. The morning was almost sultry, the sun shining intensely, and the air perfectly tranquil. The grove, with its cool, deep shadows, its murmuring brooks, its filtering sunlight, its fragrant flowers, and its myriad birds, was a calm and perfect Eden. Adah sought a seat in the deepest shade, and gave herself up to earnest thought.

Despite her wishes, the fair, handsome face of Sir Hugh obtruded itself upon her mind, and she could not avoid recalling Miss Dorothy's earnest praises of the young baronet. The little old lady had told her that Sir Hugh was deeply interested in his mysterious bride, and she could not help acknowledging to herself that she was deeply interested in him.

"If we had but met as others do!" she murmured, almost unconsciously. "If the proposal had but come from him. As it is, I will never see him again—never!"

She sighed, and looked sad, as if the resolution gave a pang to her soul. While she was thus absorbed in these reflections, and annoyed at herself for her secret yearning towards her husband, who in her heart she dared not call by that tender and holy name, the bushes behind her were parted by a man's hand, and an evil-looking face peered out at her from the protecting shade of the foliage.

It was the face of Mr. Wilmer.

No subtle instinct warned the maiden-bride of the near presence of danger. She thought and dreamed

on, unconscious that a pair of baleful eyes were watching her intently, or that her bitterest enemy was at hand, revolving in his brain schemes by which he hoped to rebuild his ruined fortunes.

As is known to the reader, when Mr. Wilmer quitted Hawk's Nest, after his discomfiture at the hands of Miss Chellis, it was with the determination to abandon his quiet schemes and become a bold, unscrupulous villain.

He had communicated his resolve to the ex-governor, who had not only encouraged him, but had proved herself an able confederate, suggesting plans of action, and even arranging the petty details with an aptitude that awakened the admiration of her employer.

It was in accordance with these new schemes that he had come secretly to Monrepos. He was skillfully disguised with false hair and colouring, and had been unrecognized at the West Hoxton Station, where he had arrived soon after daybreak.

He had stopped at the village inn for a few hours, and then, feeling secure in his disguise, had walked towards Monrepos, in the hope of hearing something regarding Lady Chellis that would assist his present plans, as well as to ascertain the popular sentiment towards himself. Fatigued with his walk, and seeing no one whom he could question, he had sought the pleasant shade of the grove he had so recently hoped to call his own, and had thrown himself upon the grass to rest. Adah's appearance had aroused him, and he had cautiously arisen, and was now surveying her with an angry, desperate gaze.

She looked so fair and tranquil as she sat there, with a tinge of melancholy in the expression of her face, with her long lashes resting against her cheeks and veiling her dusky eyes, her attitude full of repose and indicative of self-content. He could have gnashed his teeth as he gazed upon her and felt that he had fallen into the pit he had dug for her, and that the very day upon which he had hoped to impoverish her and enrich himself had seen him penniless and witnessed her establishment in her rights.

His heart seethed with evil passions. He hated her as the author of his ruin, and his lips framed themselves into a muttered and inaudible imprecation upon her. He glanced around—saw that she was alone and unattended—and with a sudden impulse tore off his disguise, thrust it into his pocket, passed his handkerchief over his face, and leaped forth from his concealment.

Adah uttered a faint cry at his sudden and abrupt intrusion upon her privacy, then, recovering herself, she arose with haughtiness, and endeavoured to pass by him on her return to the dwelling.

But he put out his hand and detained her. "Stop, Adah," he said, hoarsely. "I must speak with you."

"Any communications which you may wish to make to me, Mr. Wilmer," she answered, coldly, and with the air of an empress, "must come to me through my adviser and friend, Captain Haddell!"

She again essayed to pass him, but he stepped in the path before her, and exclaimed:

"I will tell you and you alone what I have to say, Adah. Listen to me. I have been to Hawk's Nest, and have gained a clue to the mystery of your marriage. I have learned that Sir Hugh Chellis did not even know your rightful name upon the occasion of your marriage. If such a story were told to society at large you would be compelled to lead a hermit's existence. I will keep your secret, if you will pay me liberally. If you do not I will spread a report that will reach even to this quiet place, and make a social outcast of you!"

Lady Chellis listened with curling lip and flashing eyes to his unmanly threatening, but when he had finished she turned upon him a face white and cold as marble in its superb scornfulness and passionate contempt.

"The last step of your degradation is reached," she said, in a tone full of withering scorn. "You threaten to disgrace the name my father bore if I do not bribe you. Do your worst," and her voice rang out through the grove with the silvery cadence of a bell. "Say what you will—but go!"

She raised her arm, and pointed in the direction he had come.

Angry and desperate, Mr. Wilmer would not obey her command. He had had no intention of bringing about the present scene when he had entered the grove. His nefarious schemes for rebuilding his fortunes had nothing to do with any personal application to his wronged niece. Indeed, he had resolved to keep his presence near her home a secret from her, but in an unguarded moment he had betrayed himself, and he would not now relinquish the opportunity he had gained until he had thoroughly used it.

"I will not go, Adah," he said, obstinately, "until you have secured my silence—"

"Then you will remain here always," she responded, coldly. "Tell your story. Do you think that I have no friends who will declare the truth and expose your infamy? Let the world decide between us. I do not fear its judgment!"

With a calm and haughty air she turned, and would have glided away, but he caught her arm in a vice-like grasp that was intensely painful, and hissed, rather than said:

"You dare me, then, to do my worst? You must have a small amount of womanly modesty, Adah Wilmer, if you are willing to hear the very children in the streets tell how you proposed marriage to a perfect stranger, how you bribed him to become your husband and paid him for his name as you would have paid your milliner. Why, there will be songs made about it—jokes uttered—and people will sneer whenever your name is heard. It shall be so, for I will bring about that result. You are a wife, yet not a wife. You have a husband whom you dare not claim, a husband—"

"Who is Lady Chellis's protector and defender?" cried a manly, indignant voice, finishing the sentence.

A sharp blow upon Mr. Wilmer's arm caused him to relax his grasp upon that of Lady Chellis with a cry of pain. He had scarcely freed her, when a sudden and dextrous movement of the new comer's foot precipitated him, head foremost, into the clump of bushes from which he had lately emerged, and the new comer's voice remarked, very pleasantly and very quietly:

"Next time, Mr. Wilmer, I shall be obliged to resort to more unpleasant measures. If you venture in these grounds again I will have you arrested!"

Bruised and foaming with rage, Mr. Wilmer arose and slunk away through the shade of the trees, vowing revenge for the indignity he had endured.

Then, with an easy, graceful bow, Sir Hugh Chellis—for, as the reader has guessed, Lady Chellis's defender was her husband—turned towards his bride.

She had recognized him at once, and had been tempted to flee, but had delayed it until escape was impossible. She stood before him in all her beauty, heightened by the loveliness of her confusion. The colour fluctuated in her cheeks, like the tide which comes and goes upon the white sands of the sea-shore. Her crimson lips quivered like those of a grieved child; her dusky eyes, half lifted in unconscious deprecation, were full of maidenly shame and embarrassment. Her attitude was drooping, and her hands were clasped together. Had art and not nature dictated her position, she could not have made herself lovelier, or appealed more powerfully to the quick and generous love of Sir Hugh.

His easy gracefulness vanished as he witnessed her embarrassment and remembered the sum of money she had given him. He wished, most fervently, that he could appear before her as a disinterested suitor, and not as the husband she had bought with her wealth.

"Lady Chellis," he said, deprecatingly, "I have to beg your pardon for not keeping my promise never to seek you. When I learned through the visit of your villain the name of my unknown bride, and discovered the need you had of protection, not only from him, but from the world at large, I determined to come to you at once and offer you my services as your defender. I hope my aunt has induced you to look kindly upon me, for she wrote to me last evening saying that I might call to-day."

"Humph! The young idiot!" ejaculated Miss Dorothy, who, at a little distance, was contemplating the young couple with a benevolent look, ready to make her presence known at the precise moment when her mediation should be required. "That isn't the way to begin." And she leaned heavily upon her gold-headed staff, and peered keenly out at them.

Adah did not reply to Sir Hugh's address. Her bosom rose and fell with quick throbs, her eyes drooped, and the scarlet and white played hide and seek more rapidly than ever in her cheeks.

"Adah," said Sir Hugh, coming nearer to her, and speaking with all the earnestness of his nature, "take back the gold with which you bribed me to our marriage. Take it back, and leave me free to woo you. I love you, Adah, brief as has been our acquaintance. My heart bleeds at the wrongs you have endured. Let me protect you and defend you, not as your mercenary bridegroom, but as your husband who loves you better than his life. Tell me, Adah, that you will accept me as a lover and a suitor."

He spoke with a breathless, painful eagerness, that forced its way to the heart of his young bride. Perhaps there was a kindred emotion there, for as he continued to plead for his favour, with passionate love expressed in every tone, the rose-tint settled on her cheeks, a soft, sweet light flattered up in her eyes, and a faint and tender smile curved her

mouth. His embarrassment gave her strength, courage and self-possession. She looked up timidly into his fair and handsome face, surrounded by its profusion of light waving hair, and thought in her heart how noble and grand he looked. And then she held out her hand shyly.

"There's no good in my staying here any longer," muttered the withered old fairy, her face beaming with delight. "Hugh must work his own way now. I've done what I could. I'll go back to the house before I get a dreadful rheumatism." And she hobbled back to the dwelling, her boot-heels and her staff ringing out a quaint sound on the gravel as she went.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Misfortune does not always wait on vice,
Nor is success the constant guest of virtue.

Harold.

THE evening shadows had fallen around Eden-court. The night was pleasant with starlight and the soft breath of flowers. There was a tranquil hush around the dwelling and about the grounds—a hush that encouraged the soul of Ilde Dare as she looked from her open window with questioning eyes. It was the night upon which she had planned to visit Oakshaw, in quest of the mysterious paper upon which her father's life in part depended. As she stood, in that soft dim light, her sweet face wore a resolute look, her lips a determined expression, and her eyes shone with a calm and steady radiance not unlike the glorious starlight, and indicative of the resoluteness and tranquillity reigning in her soul.

"The time has come," she murmured, softly as if fearing that even the breeze might catch her words and betray her to her enemy. "It is not yet midnight, but I see no lights about the house," and she leaned from the projecting window, and looked up and down the darkened front of the mansion. "Thorwell has retired, and is probably asleep. I will get ready at once."

She drew back, closed the curtains securely and then lighted her table-lamp. Her riding-habit lay conveniently near upon a couch, and she donned it at once, tossing aside her evening dress, her movements full of swiftness and gentleness. With nimble fingers she drew on her close-fitting jacket and tied about her neck a soft Indian scarf as a protection from the night air. She then put on over her clustering curls her low-crowned hat, from which drooped a long ostrich plume, and attached to it a veil, to be used when necessary. Throwing the lace aside from her face, she took up her gloves and paused a moment in indecision.

"I have time," she then said, half aloud. "I will see papa again and tell him not to be anxious about me."

Laying aside her gloves, she turned down the light of the lamp and stole quietly into the dim corridor, where the shadows lurked thickly on every hand, and the only light came through the great arched window at the end. With a fleet and noiseless step the maiden passed along the hall, opened her father's door and entered his room, approaching his bedside.

A night-lamp burned upon a low stand at the head of the bed, and by its light the girl saw that Sir Allyn was sleeping profoundly. Nature was claiming recompense for the sleepless days and nights of the last few weeks, and his slumbers were like the heavy, trance-like sleep following upon complete mental and physical exhaustion.

His thin, sharp features, framed in scanty gray hair, were thrown up in bold relief from his laced and ruffled pillow. His breathing was very faint and low, and one thin hand lay upon the blue satin coverlet, looking as if sculptured from marble. How pale and wan he was! How sorrow-worn was his gentle, feminine face!

His devoted daughter felt her heart thrill with ineffable tenderness as she looked upon him. She felt as a loving mother feels when her child is enduring some terrible grief which she is unable to assuage, for Ilde's love for her father was, as has been said, of the protecting, motherly character. He had so long depended upon her for advice and comfort that their natural relations had entirely changed towards each other, and Ilde was become the strong-hearted protector and he the gentle dependant.

With a look like that a young mother bestows upon her sleeping babe, Ilde bent over the gray-haired, sorrow-stricken sleeper, and realized that upon the success of her plans depended not only his happiness, but his very life. If she had needed encouragement before that reflection would have nerved her for any task.

She lingered at his side but a moment. Pressing her lips to his wan forehead, she stole away as noise-

lessly as she had come and regained her own room without having been seen.

She had scarcely closed the door behind her when it opened again, giving ingress to Miss Arsdale, who came in almost noiselessly, the train of her riding-habit thrown over her arm and her hat in her hand.

"Are you ready, Ilde?" she asked, in a whisper, when she had locked the door securely.

"Quite ready, Kate," was Ilde's response. "You are in good time. It wants ten minutes of the appointed hour."

"Better early than late," said Miss Arsdale, sending herself and putting on her hat. "You have no misgivings, Ilde, have you, about this midnight escapade? You are not inclined to give it up now?"

"You would not ask that question, Kate, if you had seen papa as I saw him just now," answered Ilde. "He was asleep, but looked so worn-out, so wretched, so utterly exhausted that my heart bled for him. He has sunk greatly since the coming of Therwell, and in order to save his life I must act promptly and with energy."

"I will assist you, dear Ilde," said Sir Allyn's ward, touched at the generous self-forgetfulness of the maiden. "I will help you to save his life and your own too, for I know that you would not long live as the wife of Therwell. We shall have a long ride and a gloomy one," she added, her tones expressive of a natural shrinking from the prospective journey, "but I have courage to follow wherever you may lead, Ilde, and confidence in your judgment and good sense, although I know so little concerning our destination and its object."

"Thanks for your trust in me, Kate," said Ilde, passing her hand caressingly over that of her friend. "You know I cannot tell you more, lest I should betray papa's secret. Indeed, Kate, I do not know the exact secret myself, but I do know that papa's name, happiness and life are imperilled, and that I must save him either by outwitting Therwell, or by becoming his wife. As to the journey it will be a long one, but we shall not be unprotected. You know my special attendant is as faithful a servant as ever existed, and is devoted to me. I went to him after dinner and told him that it was necessary for you and me to make a secret night journey, and that papa quite approved of it. I ordered him to saddle our horses secretly, and have them ready when we should appear in the gardens adjoining the stables at a quarter before twelve—"

"But do you believe we can trust him, Ilde?"

"I would trust him with my life!" declared Ilde, earnestly, pushing away her hat from her face. "Jarvis will never forget how I nursed his lame daughter last summer when she had that terrible fever. He says I saved her life, under Providence, and that he shall never rest easy until he has done something to repay the debt. When I told him about our secret journey he declared he would go with us to protect us, and I was obliged finally to consent to the faithful fellow's wishes. And really, Kate, I am thankful that he insisted upon going. If we should encounter anybody on the way or at Oakshaw, it would be as well for us to have a protector."

Miss Arsdale's face brightened, and she was about to express her satisfaction, when the little ornate clock on the mantel-shelf chimed the quarter before twelve.

The two girls arose at once.

Ilde extinguished the lamp and led the way from the room into the corridor, and downstairs towards Sir Allyn's study. They glided along near the wall noiselessly, and kept a vigilant watch as they proceeded, fearing discovery at the hands of Therwell; and neither breathed freely until they had gained the security of the study.

"The worst is over," said Ilde. "We have only to be cautious now, Kate, lest some of the servants see us. Come!"

She unlocked and opened the glazed door, and passed out into the protecting shade of the shrubbery, Miss Arsdale following closely. Side by side they glided along the shady path, secure from observation from the dwelling, until they had gained the entrance to the flower-gardens. Here they paused a moment, and looked back at the mansion. All was dark and silent in that direction, and Ilde said:

"We have not been seen. The ornamental trees in the garden will shield us now, Kate, so we need have no fear."

She took the trembling hand of her friend, and they entered the garden together. Around them, on every side, were flower-beds, laid out after a tasteful pattern, and diversified here and there by tall, closely grown thickets of flowering shrubs, that looked as though they had grown there of themselves, after a wilderness fashion, but which were the result of design.

These thickets gave relief to the usual monotony

of a flower-garden, and in summer were mounds of beauty and fragrance, being wrapped in clouds of blossoms. In the shade of these thickets, indeed in arches formed by them, were garden-seats, where one could be shut out from the surrounding world by living walls of emerald and opaline colours, and bathed in fresh, sweet perfumes, constantly exhalant from the hearts of the flowers.

The two girls kept in the shade of these graceful thickets as much as possible, bending their steps towards the rendezvous appointed with the groom. As they approached the largest of these little shrubberies, walking silently upon the grass bordering the gravelled paths, a woman's figure cautiously lifted itself from the shade, and a pair of eyes peered out at them from the surrounding foliage.

Having finished a brief inspection of the two maidens, she arose from her half-crouching position, bent forwards, and placed one finger upon her lips, in warning of caution.

Ilde beheld her at that moment, comprehended her warning, and, repressing the natural cry of surprise that arose to her lips as she recognized the woman, Mrs. Amry approached her and the half-frightened Miss Arsdale.

Mrs. Amry put out her hand and drew them into the shadow of the thicket, without a word, gently compelling them to a crouching position upon the ground beside her.

It was a pretty, cell-like nook, with its carpet of soft grass, its green foliage sprinkled with spring flowers, and its verdant and fragrant trees, through which could be seen the tranquilly smiling stars, in their cold, bright splendour. There was a larger nook beyond, in the same thicket, which was called the "laburnum bower," and in this large bower Ilde had spent many happy hours with her books or dreams.

Miss Arsdale shrank from Mrs. Amry, full of fear at the singular rencontre and Mrs. Amry's strange demeanour, but Ilde had perceived that the woman was actuated by a motive, and she was about to inquire that motive when the sound of voices struck upon her startled ears.

She recognized the voices instantly as belonging to Therwell and the Dare Arms innkeeper.

Comprehending immediately that the confederates had met for a secret consultation in the laburnum bower, and that Mrs. Amry, by some singular chance, Providence, or design, had come upon them, Ilde pressed Kate Arsdale's hands reassuringly, and listened intently for some word or sentence that might aid her in her search for the mysterious written compact, or assist her to prove her father's innocence of any wrong-doing, or show conclusively that there existed a conspiracy between the baronet's oppressors.

"I tell you, Therwell," were the first words that reached her, in the voice of the innkeeper, "you ought to come down more liberally. You know very well that you cannot get along without me. Shaveross is probably dead, but if he isn't he would not be worth to you what I am. He was a timid chap, and might have confessed any day. If Miss Dare had gone to him as she came to me he would have become maudlin, and foiled us completely. So I'm pretty valuable to you, and you'd better treat me well."

"You can have the inn, Hoadley, and the pastures, but nothing more," returned Therwell, in his soft, bland voice, that was far more distinct than the thick utterance of his confederate. "You know you dare not accept Miss Dare's offer. Keep your place, if you know when you are well off."

"I ain't so very much inferior to you, I think," said Hoadley, discontentedly. "The fact is, I've been an idiot, but I won't be so any longer. There is no earthly reason why you should take the girl, Edencourt and everything, and I have only the inn and a few fields!"

"Yet you were rejoiced at the promise of even that the other day."

"True, but I understand my value now. That visit of Miss Dare opened my eyes. I know as much as you. I run the same risks, I am your supporter and assistant; and there is no reason why my reward should not equal yours. I've no objection to your marriage with Miss Dare. That is nothing to me. But I do object to your taking everything. When I sent you that note to-day, saying I would meet you in this garden to-night, I determined that if you didn't accede to my demands I would find some other way of raising my income. You can interpret that as you like, and do what you please about it," added Hoadley, doggedly.

"I understand you," replied Therwell, in mellifluous tones, as if the subject were agreeable to him. "You must allow me to remind you that you are not absolutely necessary to me. There is a paper in existence that would prove the best of witnesses, even if you were to turn traitor to me."

"True," muttered the innkeeper, "but I should get my pay all the same. I don't pretend to be a gentleman, and you do, but I can enjoy life in my way as much as you can in yours. I'll tell you plainly what I must have if I keep faith with you. The inn, the adjoining lands, and the Rosedell Farm!"

"The Rosedell Farm is the best of all, and the largest—"

"I know it," interrupted Hoadley, coolly. "If you don't want to do it, say so."

Therwell appeared to hesitate. There was a brief silence, during which Ilde held her breath to listen, and then he said:

"So be it, then. The Rosedell Farm shall be yours."

"I must have it in black and white," declared the innkeeper. "I don't doubt your word, but gentlemen are apt to be forgetful when they get themselves into a secure position."

"Well, well," rejoined Therwell, with a slight impatience in his tone; "I'll write out the agreement for you. You can send your boy for it some evening, for it won't do for me to be seen much at the Dare Arms, or for you to be seen here, until after the wedding. If there should be any mishap, you know, it would be as well to prove that we have seen nothing of each other, and consequently cannot have been engaged in a conspiracy."

"Then we'll make out the agreement to-night. I've got a dark lantern here under my coat, and paper, pen, and ink in my pocket."

With increasing impatience Therwell objected to this proposition, declaring that the light might be seen from the mansion.

"Then we'll go to the bottom of the garden," said the innkeeper, doggedly. "There's a summer-house there as tight as a drum, with curtains to the windows, and a lock to the door. I've been there often, in the days when I was valet to Sir Allyn's father!"

After a minute's delay Therwell acceded to the request; the two men quitted the bower, and set out for the summer-house.

Mrs. Amry muttered, when the sound of their footsteps had died away:

"They'll get what they deserve some day, I don't doubt."

"How came you here?" whispered Ilde, changing her position, which had become tiresome.

"I was looking from my window and saw Therwell on the lawn in front, acting as if he were waiting for someone, miss, and, thinking he might not mean any good, I slipped downstairs and followed him into the garden. They had been talking half an hour when you came. Did you see them too, miss?"

"No, and but for your warning I should have walked directly into their presence," said Ilde. "It was a strange providence that you should have saved me from such a disaster!"

"I may yet save you from a greater grief than that, Miss Dare," responded the woman, significantly. "Your kindness to me—a poor wayfarer—will yet return in blessings upon your own head. I cannot tell you more now—I have not time—but I prophesy that you will never marry Therwell!"

"I never will if I can help it!"

"But I can and will prevent it, Miss Dare!" declared Mrs. Amry, energetically. "With one wave of my hand I could dispel the clouds that now envelope your pathway, but I am not sure that I could restore your father's peace of mind!"

"I could not be happy if papa were miserable," said Ilde, plaintively.

"I should have said that with one wave of my hand I could prevent this marriage," amended the woman. "I think I could make Therwell release your father too, but if he has proofs of aught against him I must wait and see. One week more—wait with hope and patience for a single week, Miss Dare!"

"You have then seen Therwell before, Mrs. Amry?" questioned the baronet's daughter.

"Seen him?" cried the woman, in a voice of passionate energy, through which ran a wailing undertone. "But for him, Miss Dare, I should have been the proudest and the happiest woman in the world to-night. He was a deadly serpent who crossed my pathway, only to blast and destroy my peace of mind. I vowed that I would have revenge. For years I have sought him, and sought in vain. I came here discouraged, worn out, despairing. You gave me food and shelter, and here I stumbled upon him by accident. If you had sent me away, and her voice was full of impressiveness, "I should not have found him, and you would have been doomed to a bitter, bitter life with him!"

Ilde drew nearer to the woman, looking at her with a face full of passionate eagerness, as might be seen in the subdued star-light. It seemed to the girl as if her prayers had been answered. She had

desired to meet with someone to whom the past life of Therwell was fully known, and a cry of joy arose to her lips as she felt that she had found that one in the woman she had fed and sheltered.

"You know Therwell, then?" she said. "Do you know of anything in his life which he would shrink from exposing? Has he ever broken any of the laws of the country? Tell me, dear Mrs. Amry, that I may have some weapon with which to defend myself against him!"

"Leave all to me, Miss Dare," said the woman, arising, and standing erect. "I cannot tell you now what you ask, but rest assured that you shall never be his wife. I will defend you!"

She spoke with such force of manner that Ilde felt compelled to have faith in her.

The woman looked at her thoughtfully, regarding her attire, and the rippling waves of hair that surrounded her throat, looking now like a light and dusky mass, and said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Dare, but the hour is very late. You are dressed for riding. Surely, you are not so wild as to think of abandoning your home?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" responded Ilde. Then, with an irresistible impulse to confide in this singular woman, who had promised to rescue her from the impending marriage, she added, in a whisper: "I am going, with my father's consent, and well attended, to search for the written compact of which Therwell spoke!"

"You are going to his place called Oakshaw?"

Ilde assented.

The woman reflected a moment, and then said:

"You are right, Miss Dare. The paper must be found and destroyed. With that out of the way, your father may be saved. If I knew what was in the paper, I might be able—Still, if the document be what I suspect, it ought not to be in existence. Go, Miss Dare, and may heaven prosper your errand. Go, before those men return this way!"

There were many questions which Ilde longed to ask, but Mrs. Amry's last words decided her to depart upon her errand at once. Resolving to gain the confidence of this woman on her return, she pressed her hand, said a few words of thanks, and turned to go.

"Stop!" said Mrs. Amry, as the girls stood in the arched opening of the cell. "Miss Dare, Therwell once possessed a small square mahogany box in which he kept his private papers. It was a valuable one, inlaid with a gold wreath on the top, and he prized it very highly. It had a false bottom, which opened by pressing one of the gold leaves in the front. If that box be at Oakshaw, it has this paper concealed in it. I have heard him say that it was the most secure place that could be devised for the concealment of anything of value. Look for it!"

With this parting injunction she again begged the maidens to hasten their departure before the return of Therwell. They obeyed her, hurrying away under the shadow of the shrubs and bushes to the appointed rendezvous.

It was a brief walk, made eventful by several alarms, Miss Arsdale fancying that Therwell was following them, or that she heard the two men's footsteps, but Ilde encouraged and reassured her, and they at length reached their destination in safety.

At the door of the stable-yard, a neatly paved court, they found Jarmin, the groom in whom Ilde had confided, and who was to accompany them.

He was an honest-faced, gray-haired man, whose duty it had always been, since her earliest childhood, to attend upon his young mistress in her riding excursions. As Ilde had said, he was devoted to her, but even Ilde did not know with what slave-like fidelity the old groom clung to the house and name of Dare, or with what worshipping reverence he regarded the lovely young heiress of its fame and fortunes. He came forward, bowing, with one hand uplifted, and said:

"If you please, Miss Ilde, I thought I saw a couple of men—servants, most like—prowling around in the gardens a little while ago, and, as the journey was to be secret, I made bold to take the horses round to the park, knowing that you always have the keys to the park gates."

"You have done well, Jarmin," said his young mistress. "We have been delayed a little, but quick riding will make up for lost time. We will start at once!"

The groom obeyed, and set out with rapid step towards the spot where the horses were in waiting, the two young ladies, hand in hand, following him. It was but a few steps to Eden Park, and a brisk walk of a few minutes brought them to the waiting steeds. The horses were completely caparisoned for the journey, and Ilde mounted her favourite—a fleet, graceful Arabian.

Miss Arsdale was assisted upon the back of a

thoroughbred animal which she always rode, and the groom vaulted upon the back of a swift-footed horse which was the special favourite of Sir Allyn.

"We will ride through the park, pass the lake, and go out by the lower park-gate," said Ilde, in a low tone. "Ride quietly until we reach the road, else we may be heard!"

The groom fell back behind the two young ladies, and the horses proceeded at a quiet pace upon the route designated.

Meanwhile, the woman whose assurances had done so much to lighten the heart of Ilde stood for a few moments in the little flower-decked nook, gazing in the direction the young ladies had taken.

"I don't know but I did wrong to advise her to go," she mused. "Perhaps, after all, this journey is unnecessary. Therwell would give up the paper if I were to demand it as the price of foregoing my revenge. Still, to make all sure, she had better get it. She said she would be well attended. Doubtless, she takes half a dozen servants with her. She is safe enough, whoever may be in his house."

Despite this self-assurance, the woman's manner was uneasy. She half started in pursuit of Miss Dare, and then, chiding herself for her folly, shrank back again into the shade of the little nook. She was standing there, thoughtful and abstracted, with a strange gleam on her grim face, her fingers working nervously together, when footsteps were heard upon the gravelled walk, low and cautious tones were distinguishable, and she was made aware of the return of the confederates.

Therwell's voice sounded as bland and smooth as ever; Hoadley's was full of suppressed exultation.

As the voice of the former penetrated her hearing, she became at once alert and vigilant. The abstracted look gave place to an eager expression, and she leaned forward, listening intently.

But she could gather nothing from their words, except that Therwell had written and signed the document demanded by the innkeeper. Their business was evidently concluded, and there were no allusions made to the baronet's daughter or to the approaching marriage. They passed the laburnum bower, walking slowly and almost silently; she stole out from her concealment and crept after them, taking care that her footsteps should not be heard and that her movements should be screened by the bushes.

In this way they passed around the mansion, and entered into the deeper shade of the lawn.

More fearless now, Mrs. Amry crept nearer.

The confederates, to her great disappointment, merely reiterated their mutual promises, and then separated, the satisfied innkeeper departing for Edenville, and Therwell lighting a cigar and walking slowly up and down the wide avenue.

Mrs. Amry looked at him from behind a clump of shrubbery, with gleaming eyes and a face full of passionate hatred. A lifetime of bitterness and anguish compressed itself into a single burning look that might have scorched even his guilty soul, and she lifted her arm as if invoking vengeance upon him.

Perhaps some mysterious instinct warned him of the presence of an enemy; perhaps that look really penetrated to his soul; or perhaps some subtle chord that had once bound him to that woman in some way, but which had been broken, felt that she was near. Whatever the cause, it was certain that he stopped abruptly, looked around him uneasily, and then his gaze settled upon the woman who was plainly visible to him.

She presented a strange, weird picture as she stood there, the lower half of her person in the shade of the bushes, her face leaning out towards him with the starlight resting full upon it, exaggerating its wild, passionate expression, its pallid whiteness, its menacing look, and giving even a spectral appearance to her uplifted arm.

He staggered back appalled, the cigar dropping from his lips, and his limbs trembling beneath his weight.

As she marked the effect of her appearance upon him a mocking smile flitted over the woman's stern lips.

"I—I thought she was dead!" muttered Therwell, unconsciously, his smoothness and blandness of manner gone, and a cold perspiration breaking out upon his large round face. "Alive? Alive? and here to ruin me! Alive, and eager for revenge!"

He groaned involuntarily, but sustained himself by leaning against a tree. The shock of seeing her had been so sudden, and unprepared for, that he felt his presence of mind desert him, his courage fade away, and for a moment he was almost paralyzed.

But only for a moment.

The woman gave utterance to a mocking kind of laugh that sent the blood tingling through his veins, and which seemed to set his heart and brain on fire and nerved him to action. With a quick and sudden

bound like that of a beast of prey, he sprang towards her, gained her covert, and found that she was gone! She had vanished as utterly and completely as if she had become invisible.

Wondering and alarmed, he hurried in and out of the trees and traversed this lawn, searching everywhere, but in vain, for this mysterious appearance.

There was a vein of superstition in his nature that made itself perceptible at that moment; with limbs trembling, heart beating furiously, he hurried towards the mansion, wiping the clammy dew from his face as he muttered:

"The old superstitions are not at fault. Ghosts do appear, and I have seen one to-night. Why does she appear to me? Let her come as often as she likes," he added, recklessly, "so long as she does not come in the flesh. I am less afraid of her ghost than of her living body."

Again that wild, supernatural laugh rang out on the night air.

With a stifled shriek Therwell rushed into the house, bolted the door, and crept up to his room in silence and in terror.

And then the strange woman arose from the midst of the clump of bushes, where she had fallen prostrate, and remained unseen, she then returned to the house and her own room, murmuring:

"He has had a foretaste of misery to-night. There yet remains a brimming cup which he must drain drop by drop. Yes, Ilde Dare, you shall be freed and I shall be avenged."

(To be continued.)

SPANISH EGGS.—Such is the rapidity of travelling now that Spanish eggs cross the Pyrenees, pass through France, and arrive in London in time to be sold for new-laid ones. Singular to add also, the operation of buying includes the selling of the buyers of new-laid eggs.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY.—The Royal Academy Exhibition, which has just closed, was remarkably fruitful of profit to the body. The receipts at the doors for admissions amounted to 14,619*l.*, being an increase of 8,604*l.* on those of last year. The number of visitors was 235,497, exclusive of those holding free admissions: 700 Belgians were admitted gratis, and presented with catalogues. The sale of pictures in the Exhibition exceeded in value by several hundreds of pounds those of last year.

TURKISH BATH.—The Turkish bath, after a trial of four years in the Fermoyn Workhouse, has been found a useful remedial agent in a large class of cases—for example, in congestive and inflammatory states of the internal organs and viscera, the lungs, liver, and kidneys in particular, renal dropsy, Bright's disease, &c. In virtue of its eliminating process it has been successfully employed in the treatment of rheumatism, sciatica, and gout. On the whole, I regard the Turkish bath as a valuable aid to medicine in the treatment of disease, and of very extended, though not universal, applicability. —**JOHN ROCHE, M.D.**

CORONATION OF JAMES I.—Three hundred years ago on the 25th of July the corporation of the City of Edinburgh met to appoint three commissioners to be present at the coronation of James VI. of Scotland and I. of England, son of the beautiful but unfortunate Mary. This is the minute:—"XXVTO JULII JM VC LXVIIJ.—The quik day the provost baillies and counsaill forsaide nemmis and constitutes Nycoll Vddart Michael Gilbert and Robert Abyrcrummye to pas to Striveling and thair to consent and vse the office of Commissioners of this Burch at the coronation of our Souerane James Stewart Prince of this realme and ordanisane ane commission to be made to thame to that effect subscriuit (be) thair clerk and seilt with thair seill of cans."

AUSTRALIAN LEECHES.—A very remunerative business has lately grown to pretty extensive proportions in Melbourne in the exportation of leeches. The trade is principally carried on in connection with the operations of the Murray River Fishing Company, the fishermen there employed turning their attention at seasons unfavourable to the fishery to the collection of leeches. From 150,000 to 250,000 leeches are sometimes collected in one of the trips of the company's steamers. They are then packed and conveyed to Melbourne, where a large proportion of them are put up for transmission abroad, great numbers being sent to London and Paris, where, it is stated, they are preferred to leeches brought from any other place. The principal outlet for the export is America, where the demand is always great from the absence or rarity of the proper kind of leech throughout the whole of that great continent. The exportation is likely to be a remunerative business for some years; it is anticipated that from two to three millions of leeches will pass through their hands this season.



[ROSA DECLINES TO VISIT INEZ.]

SWEET ROSES YANGLED.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Your room is better than your company, you deceitful woman; trying to look sorry when your heart is beating hallelujahs at the thought that you've secured all the money. But you'll find out before long that Jane Perkins has been one too many for you this time, sharp as you think yourself. Oh, my! won't she be cut down when she finds out how things are?"

While Mrs. Perkins thus muttered Rosa made her way to her own room, secured the door on the inner side, and, escaping through the linen-closet, gained Kitty's apartment, into which she burst with a bound that aroused her friend from her late slumbers, for Kitty had not yet risen.

In irrepressible exaltation Rosa cried out:

"Open your eyes, you sluggish, and listen to what I have to tell you. I ought to put on a long face and sham sorrow. I suppose, but with you, Kit, I need not be on my good behaviour. Only think what has happened!"

Kitty raised herself up, her long hair escaping from the comb that held it and falling over her face. She put it aside and obtained as good a view of the speaker as the dim light in the room permitted.

"What is it, Rosa? You look pleased, yet frightened. Have you seen a ghost, and has it told you that great good fortune is in store for you?"

"Nonsense! no. Mrs. Hawks is dead, Kitty, and my inheritance has fallen to me. I have the key in my pocket that holds the 'open sesame' to fortune."

Kitty sprang up, in great excitement.

"You don't say so, Rosa! This is glorious news indeed, and I sincerely congratulate you. That poor, suffering woman is better out of the world than in it, so it is idle to waste any sympathy on her fate. Come, tell me all about it, dear; I am impatient to learn every particular."

As well as she could, Rosa explained what had happened, saying that Mrs. Hawks had died so suddenly that she did not get to her bedside in time to take a last farewell of her.

"That was bad," commented Kitty; "but it was too late to make any change in her intentions towards you on account of the neglect. You must put on the deepest mourning, Rosa, and show every outward respect to the memory of the poor old lady."

"Such is my intention; and I came here to ask you to go out with your mother, and order some things for me that must be ready by the morning. I have a black dress that will answer for the funeral, but I must have a crape collar and a mourning bonnet, with a thick veil. And, oh, Kitty! don't forget to buy a dozen very fine white handkerchiefs with a broad black border around them. They will be indispensable, you know, to wipe my tears away."

A faint, derisive smile quivered on her lip, and Kitty significantly replied:

"Or to conceal the lack of them. I understand; I shall select everything in the latest style, for of all toilets a mourning one should be most carefully got up. It is so unbecoming that only extreme elegance in the material and make can compensate one for being obliged to wear it."

Rosa glanced at the reflection of herself in the mirror, and said:

"To one as fair as I am, and with my shining hair, I don't think it will be very unbecoming. At any rate, I shall not wear it longer than conventional propriety requires."

"No, indeed; and you will soon have an excuse for laying it aside altogether. Bridal robes shall take its place, and my darling Rosa shine forth a resplendent star in society next winter as Mrs. Adolphus Bates. Shall it not be so, dear?"

Rosa turned her face from the inquiring eyes fixed upon her; and with an affected shudder she said:

"Oh, Kitty, how can you bear to mix up the two extremes of life, death and marriage in such a way? It chills me even to think of my bridal in conjunction with a funeral. When your brother asks me that question I will give an explicit answer, but not before."

"I thought all that was settled long ago," said Kitty, opening her eyes very widely. "Dolly thinks himself sure of you, and there is no need of postponing the marriage."

"Ah, indeed. Well, perhaps Mr. Bates is right; but nothing is sure in this life, Kitty, till it has actually taken place. There, I won't detain you any longer, dear. I must go back to my room now, lest someone may knock at the door, and find out that I am not there."

Rosa fitted back, made a hasty observation of the parlour, which she found empty, and then, shutting herself up in solitude, gave the reins to her fancy, building castles in the air as gorgeous and glittering as boundless wealth could make them.

She revelled in the brilliant future she believed

was opening before her, and not a doubt arose in her mind as to its stability.

The will of Mrs. Hawks gave her all, and the one made by her father, for the possession of which she had bargained with Wilkins, she would destroy, and thus secure the enjoyment of the estate beyond a doubt.

Rosa had no scruples as to what should be done with it when it fell into her hands, and she thought lightly of the large sum she had agreed to pay in exchange for it.

Godfrey Fenton's image mingled with her dreams of the future, and she could not doubt that as the mistress of the fortune which should have devolved to Inez Lopez she could also lure from her the man who had played the part of lover to them both. She could forgive his temporary infidelity, and bind him to her again in bonds too strong to be broken at his own wayward will.

Rosa found it impossible to remain quiescent. With such thoughts surging through her brain, her blood was in a ferment, and she paced her floor with rapid steps till the voice of Mrs. Perkins speaking at her door arrested them.

She came with a message from Miss Lopez, who was waiting to see Miss Gordon in the next room.

"I will come in a few moments," said Rosa, in reply, and she went to her mirror and looked at her own face. It was flushed with excitement, and brilliant with triumph. Shaking her head, she muttered:

"This will never do. She will read me through if I do not wear a mask. I am actress enough to put on any semblance I choose, and I must play the broken-hearted, though I feel as if I had wings that could bear me to the empyrean. I have won this girl's fortune, and in time I will have what she values far beyond that—the love of the man to whom she is betrothed. Oh, Fortune! Blind goddess! How grateful I am to thee!"

Rosa rubbed her eyes till the lids were reddened, powdered her face till in the darkened room it looked almost colourless, and, assuming an expression of deep seriousness, she took her handkerchief in her hand, and slowly opening the door advanced towards Inez, who sat with her head resting on her hand in an attitude of deep thought.

"My dear Miss Lopez, this is a very sad meeting. I see that you feel the blow that has fallen on both of us as deeply as I do. But to me it is even heavier than to you, for through the decease of your dear aunt I have lost the only true friend I had in the world. The shock has unnerved me, and in these

first hours of bereavement I know not whither to turn for consolation."

Inez was willing to believe in the genuineness of her affliction, and she felt deep compassion for the disappointment she knew was in store for her.

She therefore gently replied:

"To heaven we are taught to look for consolation in such bereavements as this, Miss Gordon, and I have calmed myself by praying fervently for the repose of my departed aunt's soul. Her sudden death was also a shock to me, for yesterday I thought her looking better than usual. You were not with her in her last moments, I have been told?"

"No; and that adds to my affliction. Through mistaken kindness, Mrs. Perkins did not call me up, and when all was over she thought it useless to arouse me to the consciousness of the great calamity that had befallen me. Oh, Inez, I am left very desolate by the irreparable loss I have sustained."

She concealed her face in the folds of her handkerchief, and seemed to be sobbing violently. Inez soothingly said:

"Compose yourself, Miss Gordon, and try and feel that you have some claim on my father and myself. When we return from Oaklands I shall be happy to receive you as my guest at the Glades till you have decided on your future movements."

With a gesture of defiant pride, Rosa said:

"Thank you; but that is impossible. I cannot again throw myself in the way of Mr. Fenton, and I believe he is at present an inmate of your father's house."

"Mr. Fenton will not return permanently to the Glades," replied Inez, coldly, "and you need not see him when he calls unless you desire it. I asked you to come to us because I thought a few days' retirement would be agreeable to you."

"Thank you for your consideration, but I will not intrude into a house in which I feel that I should not be welcome. Your father does not like me, and—and I have friends here who will gladly take charge of me."

"As you please. I thought it right to give you the option of coming to us, and hereafter, should you wish to do so, the Glades will be open to you. I must leave you now, for I promised my father to remain no longer than was absolutely necessary. Good-morning, Miss Gordon."

The anger that was smouldering in the breast of Rosa here flamed up, and she bitterly said:

"I have warned you, Inez Lopez, and you have refused to accept the warning. You have renewed your trust in Godfrey Fenton, but he will yet break your heart. He will desert you as he did me, when he finds that you are not the heiress of your aunt's wealth."

Inez fixed her clear eyes full upon her, and proudly said:

"I do trust him, Miss Gordon, in spite of your efforts to sow dissension between us. How do you know that I am not to inherit my grandfather's estate? Did my aunt confide to you her intention to deprive me of it?"

"She did, thus far. Mrs. Hawks told me herself that I am the person most deeply interested in the contents of her will. Of course her words could bear but one interpretation."

"It matters not; construe them as you will. I shall not enlighten you till the proper time arrives. A few more days, and we shall both know what we have to depend upon. Once more good-morning."

Inez hastened from the room, filled with pity for the terrible blow that awaited her, in spite of all Rosa had done to annoy and interfere with her just rights.

The door closed upon her, and with an impatient stamp of her foot Rosa cried out:

"What did she mean by those words? What could she intend to hint? But why should I care? My future is secure, in spite of every attempt they may make to wrest from me the fortune my own wit has won. Yes, yes—I am secure, and I can afford to laugh at their futile efforts to shake my faith in my lucky star."

Mrs. Langley did not call on Rosa, which rather surprised her; but she ceased to think about it when Kitty came to her room, bringing with her the handkerchiefs about which her friend's directions had been so particular.

The two dined together, and spent the afternoon in pleasant conversation, arranging their plans for the ensuing winter, though Rosa half smiled as she thought how baseless were Kitty's hopes of claiming her as her sister-in-law. She did not think of accepting Mr. Adolphus Bates, and she intended to avail herself of the first opportunity of telling him so.

Late in the evening the milliner sent in a coquetish-looking little bonnet made of crape, and covered with a long veil to be used on the morrow to conceal the absence of the emotion the adopted daughter of Mrs. Hawks should have felt. There were also a

mantle, trimmed with folds of crape of the orthodox breadth, and several pairs of black kid gloves.

I shall not describe the funeral. Suffice it to state that it was conducted with every regard to propriety and good taste, and Inez was perfectly satisfied with the arrangements made by her lover. Mrs. Langley accompanied Fenton, and herself and Adolphus Bates escorted his sister and Rosa; but the two parties held themselves aloof from each other as much as possible.

The coldest and briefest recognition passed between Fenton and Miss Gordon, and no word was uttered by either. Mrs. Perkins and Dick also formed a part of the funeral cortege, and when they reached Oaklands they found everything in readiness for the funeral, to which several of the country families had come.

Inez wept some bitter tears over the desolate life and sudden death of her aunt, but no one knew better than herself that the deceased had repelled the affection she might have had, and it was not in nature that she should deeply grieve over the decease of a relative who had always despised her, and at the last had placed a comparative stranger in the position she was herself entitled to fill.

An elaborate repast had been prepared by Mrs. Wilkins, and on the return of the company from the grave they gathered around the table.

The old friends of her family approached Inez with kind greetings, and hopes were expressed that they should soon have her among them as a resident at the old place. She received these courtesies with her usual gentle grace, but evaded giving a positive reply.

Rosa looked on and listened in scornful triumph, wondering if these simple-hearted people thought it a matter of course that the fortune of Mrs. Hawks should descend to her niece. To her intense relief, the lugubrious affair was at length over, farewells exchanged, and the whole party were ready to return.

Adolphus Bates made up his mind that, before they reached Newport, Rosa should give him a positive assurance of her intention to bestow herself and her presumed inheritance upon him.

He availed himself of the first opportunity to withdraw her from the others, and to this Rosa passively submitted, for she began to be very weary of his devotion, and thought this as good an opportunity as she could have to give him to understand that she had no intention of accepting him.

In spite of Fenton's coldness to her and his devotion to Inez, her passion for him sprang into new and fiercer life, and Rosa felt that she could never give her hand to any other man while a chance remained that he might yet be won.

In comparison with Godfrey, her foppish lover seemed utterly contemptible, so she was not in a mood to soften the terms of her refusal.

The moon shone down on her calm face as Adolphus whispered:

"Rosa, darling, why do you look so coldly on me? Have I offended you in any way? Oh, my angel, in this hour I desire above all things to win the confirmation of the hopes you have permitted me to indulge!"

Unmoved by his fervour, she icily replied:

"You have not offended me, Mr. Bates. You only weary me by constantly referring to a subject I wish to set at rest between us for ever. I cannot marry you, for I do not feel for you that affection you would be entitled to from your wife. I beg that you will speak to me in this way no more."

The astonishment of Mr. Bates at this unlooked-for declaration was even greater than his chagrin. He exclaimed:

"Rosa, do I hear aright?"

"I believe I spoke plain English, sir," was the disdainful reply.

And Bates rapidly went on:

"Then you have played with me till you have secured your own position; and, that done, you cast me off. You have wilfully deceived me, Miss Gordon. You have worn your mask as long as it suited your purpose to do so, and you drop it in the first moment of assured success. If your schemes with reference to Mrs. Hawks had failed I might perhaps have received a different answer; but I, at least, have been disappointed, for I asked you to be my wife before I knew that you would gain anything by the death of the old lady."

This plain speaking irritated Rosa, and she bitterly retorted:

"But not before Kitty had betrayed my confidence with regard to the will made in my favour. You asked me then to marry you, Mr. Bates, but not before. I believe that we now fully understand each other, sir, and farther words will be superfluous."

Rosa turned from him almost contemptuously; and, outraged and astonished at this summary dismissal of his pretensions, Adolphus hastened to confide his unexpected discomfiture to his sister. Kitty listened

in incredulous amazement, for she had thought the future of the two definitely settled.

Mr. Bates ended by saying:

"Miss Gordon has no farther use for us, Kitty; and I now believe her heartless enough to break off her friendship with you, devoted as you have been to her. As to myself, I have done with her, and I shall leave for London in the morning. My father declares that he must have money to keep the house from crashing, and I shall take the girl he has selected for me. If Ada Pierre isn't as beautiful or brilliant as your friend she will probably make me a more suitable wife. I have awakened from my delusion, Kitty, and I only hope that you will soon come to your senses too, and let this handsome tigress go her own way. It will be better for us all to wash our hands of her I am now convinced."

But Kitty could not be induced to take this view, and she entreated her brother to allow her to remonstrate with Rosa.

This he utterly refused, declaring that nothing should induce him to renew his offer to Miss Gordon.

It was midnight when they reached the hotel again; yet, late as it was, Kitty went into Rosa's room and asked her to explain what had happened that night.

To this entreaty she penitently replied:

"I am tired to death and not well. I wish you would not annoy me with questions now, Kitty. If you insist on knowing why I refused your brother, I must tell you that it is because I do not love him; and, what is more, I never shall do so. I hope that is satisfactory."

"Quite so," replied Kitty, with a calm assumption of dignity, though she became very pale. "I only wish that you had known your own mind a little sooner, Rosa. I have loved you very dearly, and I have done all that lay in my power to serve you, but this last act of yours has opened my eyes as to your true character. I cannot forgive the way my brother has been treated by you. You have led him on in every possible way, and now that you have gained what you have schemed for you cast him off. I bid you good-night, and good-bye at the same time, for I shall insist that mamma return to London with Dolly. We will leave in the morning, and after what has occurred to-night I don't suppose that you will care how soon we go."

"Why should I?" asked Rosa, coldly. "If you are willing to give me up on such slight grounds, of course I shall not entreat you to retain a place in your affections for me. Good-bye, Kitty; school-girl friendships are not often worth much, and ours has had its day, I suppose. Don't be too hard on me, for if I had consented to marry your brother I should have made him miserable."

Poor Kitty was half broken hearted at this sudden rupture with one she had so unselfishly loved, but she was too deeply outraged to betray all she felt. She held out her hand and said:

"I will not give you a Judas kiss, nor receive another from you, Rosa. It is all over between us, for from this hour I give you up; but you will never find a better friend than I have been to you."

Rosa took the offered hand, and said:

"Good-bye, Kitty. I think you are very unreasonable to look on my refusal of your brother as a sufficient cause for breaking off our friendship. But since it is your wish to do so, I will not remonstrate."

"It is not the refusal, Rosa, but the encouragement that preceded it that—it is useless to talk about it now. I hope we shall never meet again—never! It would be too painful."

Kitty escaped from the room, and went to her own to cry herself to sleep, for she was tender-hearted and sincere, and Rosa was left alone. She wearily muttered:

"So that phase of my life is over, and those vulgar, rich people finally got rid of. They have served my turn, and now I have done with them. Poor Kitty deserved a better return for all her kindness. I do like her, but the others are not to my taste, and with my fortune I can soon find those who will suit me far better than the Bates family."

Thus musing, Rosa hastened to disrobe, and throw herself upon her couch, where she soon fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE voice of Mrs. Perkins at her bedside awoke Rosa, and she sprang up, bright and animated, the meaning of the summons rushing at once upon her mind.

"Mr. Manly will be here at eleven o'clock, Miss Gordon, and I thought you had better be aroused in time to eat your breakfast comfortably before the time comes for reading the will. So I made bold to come in and speak to you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Perkins; you were quite right

to do so. "I shall be ready directly; order breakfast in half an hour if you please. I really feel hungry this morning."

The woman went out, muttering to herself:

"I wonder how much appetite she'll have for her dinner! It's a fall she's going to get, and she'll take it as badly as anyone I know. After all her trifling with that young Bates she sent him adrift last night, I know. If she'd only known what is in store for her, she'd have kept him to his promises. But he's had a lucky escape, and he may thank his stars that Mr. Fenton made me hold my tongue about what Mrs. Hawks did before that last fit seized her."

Rosa did not dress hurriedly. She made a very careful toilet, and as she stood before the mirror she thought that however unbecoming mourning was to most women it only increased the dazzling fairness of her complexion and proved how charming she could be in any dress.

Assuming an air of coquettish languor, she finally issued from her room to enjoy the delicate breakfast prepared for her, with the triumphant feeling that henceforth the world lay at her feet, and that she had only to stretch forth her hand to grasp the varied delights it offers to youth, beauty and fortune.

She revelled in the thought of Inez's disappointment and the humiliation of Fenton. She had no pity for either, and she almost resented the thought that any portion of the estate must be surrendered to her rival in love, if not in fortune.

The breakfast things were removed and Rosa prepared for the reception of the expected party. The jewel casket was brought forth and placed on a table, and very soon afterwards a noise outside the door warned her of the arrival of Mr. Lopez and his daughter.

By the use of a crutch and Fenton's arm, he was led safely into the room, and Miss Gordon received him with the stately grace of a young princess doing the honours of her court. At Fenton she cast a single glance, full of triumphant meaning, which she left him to interpret at his leisure, and to Inez she offered her hand with a patronizing air that the elder gentleman felt inclined to resent. He hastily said:

"Miss Gordon, from your manner one would think that you were the niece and my daughter the dependant of the poor old lady whose last testament we are about to inspect."

To this taunt Rosa replied, with bland sweetness: "I had the honour to be recognized as the adopted daughter of my dear deceased friend, Mr. Lopez, and that, I believe, entitles me to as much consideration as a niece can claim."

His keen black eyes surveyed her with an expression she could not fathom, but he only said:

"Well, well—least said is soonest mended; we shall soon see in what way my sister-in-law thought of my young lady."

Rosa raised her head defiantly and closed her red lips firmly over her set teeth to restrain the words that rushed to them. She believed his pettishness to be the offspring of his fears that his own daughter had been disinherited for her sake, and she thought she could bear his ill-humour till the full measure of her triumph burst on the assembled group and atoned for the rudeness she was now made to endure.

Fenton left the room, and to her surprise returned accompanied by Mrs. Langley. In a few more moments Mr. Manly entered, closely followed by Dick and Mrs. Perkins, and the door was closed.

After bowing coldly to Mrs. Langley, for she resented her abandonment of herself for Inez, Rosa drew Mr. Manly aside and asked, in a low tone:

"Why is a stranger invited to be present at the reading of the will? Mrs. Langley can have no interest in it."

In great embarrassment the lawyer replied:

"You will very soon understand why she came, Miss Gordon. At present I cannot explain. The time is progressing, and we must attend to the business in hand at once, for I have an appointment at one o'clock."

She laughingly replied:

"You cannot proceed too soon to do what brought you hither, sir. I am quite ready to hear myself proclaimed the heiress of Mrs. Hawks's estate, for such she herself assured me I should be."

The expression of compassionate interest that flitted over Mr. Manly's face was incomprehensible to Rosa, but it did not awaken a suspicion of the truth. She turned coldly from him, and, seating herself near the table on which the casket rested, spoke aloud as she pointed to it:

"In that casket the will of Mrs. Hawks will be found, and here is the key, Mr. Manly, in this sealed envelope. Mrs. Perkins can testify that it has not been opened since my dear friend locked it with her own hands."

With a low bow Mr. Manly received the key and replied:

"No such testimony is needed, Miss Gordon. All present are fully convinced that the document in question will be found exactly as it was left by our late lamented friend."

"Lamented!" sneered Mr. Lopez, *sotto voce*. "I wonder if old Jeremiah would not have done more in that time if he could have been resuscitated for the purpose. Why should anybody lament that selfish old woman, I wonder? If it turns out that she has cut Inez off, I shall soon follow her to the other world."

Luckily these irreverent mutterings were unnoticed, for all were intent on the movements of the lawyer.

With due professional gravity he broke the seal of the envelope, unlocked the casket, and drew from it the important document, the contents of which were to be so crushing to at least one of the expectant hearers—so disappointing to the others.

Mr. Manly read the endorsement, opened it, and, clearing his throat, proceeded to read in a distinct voice the disposition of Mrs. Hawks's estate, so lately written by himself. He made a pause at that point, and Rosa triumphantly turned to Mr. Lopez, and said:

"I think my claims as an adopted daughter are now fully vindicated, sir. What is your opinion?"

"It is just the same as it was before—that Eunice Hawks was an old simpleton, and you an accomplished deceiver. But we have not heard all yet. I see that the feeble hand of my sister-in-law has added something to what you wrote, Mr. Manly, so pray let us hear that."

Rosa gasped for breath; she became pale as death as she faltered:

"No, no—that was all the will contained when it was placed in the casket. If anything has been added to it, it is a forgery."

"Ah, indeed, young lady. I will swear to Eunice Hawks's writing, and that is certainly hers. Besides, we have two witnesses to prove that on the last night of her life she took the will from that casket herself, and added a codicil to it. Mrs. Perkins was present, and she brought Mrs. Langley in to witness the signature of her mistress, and to affix her own after it. Whatever it contains is certainly valid."

Rosa felt as if life was receding from her, but she made a violent effort to regain self-control, and she said to the lawyer:

"Go on, sir. I do not suppose that there is any material alteration in the disposition of the estate."

Thus commanded, Mr. Manly, in a low tone, but with perfect distinctness, read the last words written by Mrs. Hawks in that paroxysm of wounded feeling and outraged pride which had hastened her death.

Every word struck upon the heart of the baffled schemer as the stroke of a dagger; but the very sharpness of the blow sustained her for a time. Colour returned to her cheeks and lips, and she defiantly turned her flashing eyes from face to face and slowly said:

"There has been a base conspiracy to defraud me of the wealth my dear old friend designed for me, and I declare my intention to expose it at all hazards. What but shameful falsehood could so suddenly have changed the feelings of Mrs. Hawks towards me? for I am unconscious of having done anything to offend or alienate her."

Mrs. Langley here came forward, looking very pale, but firm in her resolve to avow her own share in the transactions of that sad night. After an effort she cleared her voice and addressed herself directly to Rosa.

"Miss Gordon, to me you owe it that fortune has eluded your grasp. I was shocked at seeing you mimic your benefactress for the amusement of strangers, and I so contrived it that on the night you gave that last exhibition in my parlour the old lady was brought into this room. That door was unclosed a few moments when you were in the height of your shameful mockery. A mirror was so placed that she saw you reflected in it, and understood what you were doing. She was taken back to her chamber, where she lay unconscious for several hours; but, with the first reaction of her mind, she ordered her will to be brought to her, and, with her own hand, added the codicil you have just heard read. I was sent for in time to witness her signature; my name and that of Mrs. Perkins follow it as witnesses; and it will be utterly useless for you to attempt to dispute its authenticity."

Rosa listened like one in a terrible dream. She faintly asked:

"What had I done to you, Mrs. Langley, that you should have injured me so irreparably? You urged me to do what I did that night, I now see with what intention. Was it kind—was it generous—to treat me thus?"

Mrs. Langley changed colour and looked embarrassed, but she steadily replied:

"When so much was at stake for one in whom I am deeply interested I felt it necessary to unmask you, Miss Gordon. I thought it unjust that you should obtain possession of Mrs. Hawks's fortune to the exclusion of her niece, so I showed you to her in your true character. If I did wrong, I am sufficiently punished by the unexpected *dénouement*. If I had dreamed that the knowledge of your perfidy would have destroyed the old lady I should never have attempted to betray it."

"Ah, yes," said Rosa, exultingly, "you see how much she loved me! And, after all, Miss Lopez gets no more than she claimed under the will; so what have you really gained by ruining me? We are all friends here, so I will propose what has now occurred to me. The codicil is written on the bottom of the sheet, and it is blank on the other side. Let us tear it off and destroy it, and I will give Mr. Lopez a written agreement to divide the inheritance equally with his daughter. There is enough to make us both rich, so why should we contend about it?"

Her manner was so wild and excited, this proposal so impossible to be carried into effect, that the listeners believed the sudden shock had deprived her of her senses.

Mr. Manly sternly said:

"Such a thing could not be done, Miss Gordon. You are not quite sane, or you would never have proposed it."

Rosa raised her hand to her brow with a helpless gesture of dismay and defeat, as she faltered:

"Perhaps I am mad. My brain seems bursting, and—and everything begins to grow dark before me. Give me water—water!"

A glass containing wine was held to her lips, and the reaction it produced restored the strength and energy which had deserted her. With a smile of mockery, she turned to Inez, and said:

"You heard how the fair proposal I made was received; we cannot divide the estate because an absurd scruple stands in the way. Deliver me from people who cannot distinguish between what is just and what seems right to their narrow minds. We are both impoverished, Miss Lopez—I utterly so, and you in all that you hold most dear; for that man," pointing towards Fenton, "will never marry you now—never! He has no fortune of his own; and you, without the wealth of your aunt, will soon be no more to him than I now am."

"It is false!" cried Fenton, impetuously. "I love Inez as I never loved any other woman, and my actions shall prove how little I value the fortune of which she has been deprived."

Rosa looked at him with a singular expression in her eyes.

She drew several long inspirations, as if struggling to gain breath enough to speak clearly. Her voice sounded cold and dissonant as it issued from her lips.

"You think so now, perhaps, Godfrey Fenton, but wait till you have time to reflect on the consequences of such an alliance. To you a thousand a year will be poverty, and Mr. Lopez must share even that. But it is idle to speculate on impossibilities. I wish to speak only a few more words to you, sir. A presentiment I cannot rid myself of warns me that our fates are linked together for some evil purpose; and this day it had been far better for you if I had secured the inheritance I so lately believed was within my grasp. Convinced that you no longer love me, I should have followed my own bent and lived the gay life for which I am best fitted, but you induced my friend to thwart my ambitious aspirations, in the hope that by ruining me you would serve the one you prefer to me; and I here renew the vow uttered once before, in a moment of overwhelming bitterness—I will pursue you, Godfrey Fenton, till I find means to strike you down as you have stricken me; and such women as I am fail not when they set their very life upon a purpose!"

She sank back pale and trembling, and Mr. Lopez interrupted the reply that arose to Fenton's lips. He peevishly said:

"Why should we sit here to listen to the ravings of a half-demented girl? I believe her head is turned by the loss of the money she tried so hard to win. Take possession of the will, Manly, but delay acting upon it as long as possible, for I still cherish the hope that the settlement which will render it null and void may turn up before it is admitted to probate."

The lawyer obeyed, and Rosa saw him put the document in his pocket without attempting to interfere, though she felt the impulse upon her to rush upon him, snatch it from his hands, and tear into fragments the obnoxious codicil.

She laughed aloud.

Such a laugh! It made everyone shudder who heard it, and in the same monotonous tone she again spoke:

"Yes, take the will which brands me as a contemptible deceiver; but I am no worse than those who tempted me to do that which they knew would lead to my ruin. The plot was worthy of him who conceived it, and that man was Godfrey Fenton. I wish you joy of your lover, Miss Lopez; an honourable and unstained husband you will gain, if you can succeed in making him marry you; but, as I have already said, he will hardly do that. He has flirted with others as seriously as with you, and nothing resulted from it. Like the rest, your time to be deserted will come. If you really wish your daughter to marry this man, Mr. Lopez, I advise you to have no delay; secure him at once, or it will be too late."

"Thank you for your advice, Miss Gordon," replied that gentleman, with a sneer; "but I think I can manage my affairs and those of my daughter without it. I have listened long enough to this impertinence. Get me away, Godfrey, before I say something I might be sorry to say to a woman. Open the door, Dick, and wheel my chair into the hall. Good-bye, fair tergiteant. I hope your disappointment to-day will not prove fatal to you."

"It will not to me, but it surely shall to some others I could name," was the defiant response made as Dick hastened to remove the invalid from the room, followed by the rest of the party, with the exception of Mrs. Perkins.

A few whispered words from Mrs. Langley induced her to pause and scan the wild face of Rosa, and she softly closed the door on the other side and drew near to her.

(To be continued.)

REPENTANCE.

"Am, Audré, my darling, I'm a happy man tonight."

Standing in the shadow of the tossing maples, with the sweetest scent floating in the dreamy air, Lashley Hall stooped to look into the little drooping face that was trying to hide itself against his arm. Audré Verne stole a starry, swiftly retiring glance at him, and hid her face again.

It would have been difficult to find a lovelier creature than Audré was, with her shining eyes, her soft clinging curls, and lithe young figure; and so timid that her lover must have had to coax long and listen intently to get his answer from her bashful red lips. But he had obtained it somehow, or Audré would not have been blushing so delightfully and letting her shy fingers nestle like birds within the warm clasp of his hand.

"And now we must go and tell Christina," he said, gently drawing Audré towards the house. "I wonder if it will surprise her much."

Audré shrank back a little.

"I used to think you loved Christina, Lashley."

"And so I do, but not as I love you, little pet. Christina is my sister; you are my betrothed."

"But do sisters blush when a brother's name is suddenly mentioned, or when they talk of him? I have seen Christina look at you with those great black eyes of hers. I am sure, Lashley—I mean I am afraid—"

"Well, you needn't be," Lashley said, with a laugh. "Christina and I have been brought up together, like brother and sister. There is no danger of her feeling any deeper interest in such a scapegrace as I am. She knows me too well, ha, ha!"

Audré felt instinctively, however, that she was right in her conjecture about Christina, but she let him lead her in through the trellised doorway, to a quiet, pleasant room, in which a young girl sat looking at the opposite walls, dreamily forgetful of the open book upon her knee.

Christina Guilde was taller than Audré, and looked much older—a woman of stately and somewhat majestic presence—handsome, with brilliant black eyes, and black hair plaited in heavy braids about her head.

She turned as the two came in, and her red lips parted as if to speak; but there was something in the look of both that arrested the words and made her catch her breath involuntarily. Lashley came forward at once, with Audré, who beheld in that handsome, pale face the confirmation of her conjectures, and shrank accordingly.

"Congratulate me, sister Christina," Lashley said; "Audré has promised to be my wife."

Christina Guilde was a proud woman—prouder than most—but she had never suspected this which had been going on within her own observation. She felt so sure that Lashley loved her. The fear that he might love that little yellow-haired Audré, that pretty, childish, baby-faced maiden, had never entered her mind. She was a proud woman, but the shock of this was too sudden for even her power of self-control.

"Audré—Audré—your wife, Lashley!" she stammered, trying to rise from her chair, but dropped down beside it insensible.

"I told you so; oh, Lashley!" sobbed Audré, throwing herself upon her knees, and chafing the cold hands of Christina in her own.

"Tush!" Lashley said; "the room is frightfully warm, and we startled her coming in so suddenly."

He threw the sash wide open as he spoke, and the night air streamed in.

Christina roused as it passed over her face, her black eyes opened, and dwelt in a long look upon Audré's face. They seemed to say, though her lips did not move:

"I hate you for this, Audré Verne; he would have loved me but for you."

At any rate, Audré, timid child, shrank from her look as though she really had said the words, and dropped the cold hand she was holding between her own.

Lashley came forward from the window, saying: "My dear sister, are you ill?"

Christina's eyes rested an instant upon his face wonderingly.

Could he be so unconscious, as he pretended to be, of the state of her heart? Then he should remain so; and rising without any aid—she would not suffer him to assist her—only remarking that she was ill, and left the room.

Christina and Audré had been school friends, and up to this moment a strong attachment had existed between them.

Christina was a woman of few affections. Orphaned young, her father at his death had bequeathed her to the guardianship of Lashley Hall's father, and she and Lashley had grown up like brother and sister together.

Lashley had entertained no warmer affection for her than a brother's; but Christina, having so few to love, had early learned to love her adopted brother far beyond sisterly limits, and this feeling had been encouraged in her by the elder Mr. Hall, who would have liked nothing better than to have seen his son her husband, and had suffered this desire to become known to her.

Lashley, to do him justice, had no suspicion of the state of Christina's heart, and upon the one occasion on which his father had alluded to the subject of marriage had dismissed it in a manner that decided him to say no more about it for the present.

Then Audré Verne came, and Lashley's heart capitulated at once. He was of too generous and modest a nature to believe, even when Christina faintly, that the discovery of his love for Audré had anything to do with it.

He persisted in believing that, as she said, she was ill, and when Christina made her appearance the following morning, pale, but smiling, and seemingly happy, he looked at Audré triumphantly.

Christina's beauty was of that peculiar kind to last, and years but matured it. She did not marry, however. She would not marry without love, and she had loved Lashley too sincerely to look with kindness upon another.

During all these years two passions had been moulding her nature—Love and Hate. She was not a bad woman. She would have been as good, perhaps better than most, if it had not been for the hatred that warred within her. She never went to visit Lashley and Audré, and she contrived to be absent when they came to the old place.

Finally Audré died, and when she had been dead a year Lashley came home, bringing his only child, a lovely little girl of eight, the counterpart of her mother, and also named Audré.

He found Christina a woman of queenly beauty and rare fascinations, and though he had truly loved Audré, he learned to love this liquid-eyed, raven-tressed Christina with a passionate devotedness that was as unlike his love for Audré as the sunlight is unlike the moon's mild ray.

His heart would leap at the sound of her light footfall or the murmur of her silver-cadenced tones. When she looked at him he seemed to see heaven in her eyes, and when he tried to tell her how he loved her his voice grew husky with emotion and misgiving, and the words died away in his throat.

Christina had no suitors.

She was no coquette, and encouraged no attentions that could make even Lashley jealous.

He knew he had no rivals, but what reason had he to think that this incomparable woman cared more for him than the rest? He confessed to himself none, and remained silent.

But one day he had fallen asleep in a window seat, and dreaming, as usual now, of Christina, he thought she came and kissed him.

The fancy seemed so real, so apparent to his senses, that it waked him, and even then, he still felt a strong thrilling joy, and the tender lips seemed to linger upon his forehead.

As he stirred there was a low rustle near him, and, starting up, he saw Christina.

Her eyes were downcast, her cheeks crimson with confusion, but she was too proud to flee when flight would have revealed so much.

In an instant he was at her feet, and the story of his love was told, with a fervency of utterance, an earnestness of pleading, that might have won a more obdurate heart than hers to listen to him.

Christina loved him, and she did not keep him in doubt long.

She put her white, firm hands in his frankly, at once, though she could not look at him for fear of showing her delight.

They were married; but instead of returning to the home in which he and Audré had lived, Lashley, at the desire of her whose wishes were now his law, remained at the old place.

Christina had property of her own, and Lashley was rich.

They rebuilt and improved, and made their home, outwardly, all that heart could desire. They seemed to all who knew them to lack for nothing that could make life desirable, and were the envy of most.

There was a shadow, however, within their beautiful home, a discordant presence growing, brooding upon the hearth-stone.

The little Audré was her father's darling, his pet, his delight, and pride; and Christina, who saw in her only the mother whom she had hated so, detested the child equally with her who was dead. She grudged every caress her husband bestowed upon her. She was jealous of his love for her. She would have had him never speak to the child if she could have had her own way; and she herself was far oftener harsh to her than otherwise, and made her feel her dislike of her constantly.

Audré was a very lovely child, and possessed a disposition of the most engaging sweetness, so that everybody who saw her loved her, except her beautiful step-mother.

Audré, who was as sensitive as she was lovely, would shrink like a shadow from her presence, and feared her in a way that was pitiful to see. But it was rarely that she put her terror in words, and Lashley had been long conscious of this; yet Audré and he had never exchanged a word upon the subject. It was enough for him to see his darling's large soft eyes fill with tears, and her patient lip quiver in spite of her efforts to control herself; and when she sobbed sometimes in his arms, without giving any reason, his indignation grew, and more than once Christina and he disagreed. Each scene of that sort Christina accused Audré of causing, and treated her more coldly than ever.

Lashley, therefore, redoubling his efforts to make his pet happy, seemed so completely lost in his love for her that his wife concluded that he had never cared for her—that he had no heart save for Audré's child; and, in anger, she told him so. He replied with some warmth, reproaching her; and the result was that, when he was suddenly summoned from home upon important business, the two parted, for the first time in their lives, coldly.

When he went he expected to return the same week, but an unexpected complication arising in the matter he had gone to look after, it became necessary that someone should go in search of certain important evidence bearing directly upon this business.

It was not necessary for Lashley to go, but, in his perplexed and unhappy state of mind, he decided to make the journey as a diversion and relief from his pain.

Perhaps he should be able to look more wisely at his domestic troubles after a few weeks' reflection and absence from them, and having, when he left home, taken Audré with him and placed her among friends whom she seemed happy with, he felt sufficiently at ease with regard to her to undertake the journey.

He wrote Christina a long and gravely affectionate letter, expressing a hope that both might be able to see their way more clearly before they met again. But Christina, already angered at his taking Audré with him instead of herself, supposing her to be the companion of his journey, was more angry than before and made no reply to the letter.

Audré was enjoying her stay from home very much, when, one day, a gentleman who had called remarked that he had just come from where Audré's home was, and, unconscious of either her presence or the relationship, he added that he heard, while there, that Mrs. Hall lay very ill with fever, and that such was the panic created by her illness and the appearance of so terrible a disease that it was impossible to procure any competent and reliable nurse to attend upon her. The servants, it was said, had all quitted the house, and the proud and haughty Christina was likely to be left to die alone, or nearly so.

Audré, sitting in the farther part of the room,

listened attentively. Nobody saw her when she crept out of the room with a very pale face, and murmured to herself:

"I wish I knew what I ought to do. I am sure papa would say I ought to go—papa wouldn't blame me, I know, and—and—" she stifled a little sob—"they wouldn't let me go, I know. I am glad now that papa gave me some money when he went away."

Audrée was twelve years old by this time and intelligent beyond her years, besides possessing a quaint share of wisdom of her own that was valuable in this emergency.

When Dr. May called the next day upon his patient Mrs. Hall, grumbling as he went at the cowardice of the neighbours, a little form rose up, doll like, from beside the couch and said, calmly:

"I thought you were never coming, doctor."

Dr. May turned as pale as though he had seen a ghost, then he seized her, and, running out of the house, set her down breathless in the garden, saying:

"Don't go inside that house again, Miss Audrée."

She looked a little frightened, and pretended to mind him, when he told her to go away; but the instant he entered the house she crept back and hid herself till he was gone; the next morning he found her there again, assisting the awkward and incompetent nurse whose services had been the only one he could obtain for Mrs. Hall.

He could not so easily lay hands upon her this time. She eluded him like a fairy, and to all his persuasions, threats, scolding, and coaxing, replied that she had come back on purpose to take care of "mamma," and he must not say one word against her doing so.

In vain he protested, saying it was silly for a child like her to stay there; that it could not be; she would never live to see her papa again if she stayed; and her papa would never forgive him for letting her be there.

Audrée said she was twelve years old, and not afraid of dying. Heaven would take care of her there as well as anywhere; and papa would say she had done right when he returned.

Dr. May went away then, but he stole back after a while, and, making her a captive again, departed to take her home with him.

Audrée submitted at first, but half-way she made the kind-hearted old doctor stop and listen to her while she reasoned in her simple fashion with him. It was a wise little Audrée that talked to him.

There is no wisdom purer than that issuing from the guileless heart of a child, and as she talked her sweet face looked to Dr. May like that of an angel.

Dr. May was an old family friend—the only one indeed who had suspected the unhappiness which subsisted between Lashley Hall and his wife. In his agony of dismay and pain Lashley had one day told him all; but none of them had thought that Audrée understood so keenly how matters were as she proved now that she did.

"You know, Dr. May," she said, gently, "that there is scarcely any danger of my taking the disease that mamma is ill from, and if I should I don't think papa would miss me as much as her. He may have other children, but he would never find another like mamma; and then, if heaven should grant to a little girl like me to do anything towards saving her life, I—I think perhaps mamma Christina would love me at last, and papa would be happy then, and so should we all."

Dr. May, knowing of old that Audrée could occasionally have a very firm mind of her own, and perhaps for other reasons, took her back to the sick-bed and left her there.

When the neighbourhood became aware of what was going on Dr. May was greatly blamed; and of course nobody thought that a delicate child like Audrée would ever live through such an experience as that. But Dr. May told them to mind their own business; Audrée was stronger than she looked. Heaven's own angels would take care of her.

And so they did; but the doctor and the nurse were their agents. Little Audrée was the object of unceasing surveillance on the part of both nurse and physician. The nurse seemed almost to reverence the child as something holy, and watched the young hands, anticipated the young feet in every possible way, and listened to her slightest word as though it had been an oracle.

There is no doubt that Audrée's cleverness, assisted by the nurse's strength, her love making up for the nurse's indifference, gave Christina such nursing as she could not otherwise have had, and probably did much towards saving her life.

For she lived—awoke slowly from delicious unconsciousness to sanity and a knowledge that her beauty was all gone, herself a miserable wreck.

She watched Audrée through those weary days

of convalescence in a kind of stupor, asking now and then a question, and sinking into sad silence again.

"Had she been there long?"

"Almost ever since she was taken away."

"Then she hadn't accompanied her father?"

"No, she had stayed with some friends till she heard mamma was ill."

"And did she come home for that?"

"Yes."

Christina shut her eyes, and tears forced their way through her eyelids. She knew already from the doctor and nurse of Audrée's devotion and untiring attendance upon her, and presently she called the child to her.

"Why did you come to take care of me, Audrée?" she asked. "You can't love me, child; why did you care whether I lived or died?"

"I do love you, mamma, if you will let me. I didn't wish you to die; I wanted you to get well and love Audrée."

Christina's proud face quivered in every feature.

"But you may have taken the fever, Audrée, and you may die. Did you think of that?"

"Yes, I thought; but papa would have you, and that would be better than to have me, if he couldn't have but one, and I should go to mamma."

Christina broke down at that completely, sobbing in an anguish that frightened the child, who shrank back, as was her old custom; but Christina reached and drew her into her arms, saying, solemnly:

"Heaven do by me as I will by you, Audrée, hereafter. If heaven will graciously spare us both, you shall never miss your own mamma again, so far as a fallible creature like me can fill her place to you."

Lashley Hall had been written to at the beginning of Christina's illness, but the letter had been unable to find him in his wanderings, and consequently he came home, knowing nothing of her illness till he heard of it in the village.

Christina cried and hid her face when she heard he had come; but Audrée brought him to her side, and, clasping the frail shadow of his once proud and beautiful wife to him with more than his old tenderness, Lashley said to her:

"It was not for your beauty I loved you, Christina, my own. It was for the nobleness of soul and truthfulness of heart which shine out now beyond all price, and make you dearer to me than ever you were in the highest moment of your beauty."

"Not mine, oh, Lashley. If there be anything left in me worth loving it is through Audrée. Help me to be all I ought and fervently wish to be to her." Christina said, clinging to him, and sobbing in the fulness of her joy and penitence.

C. C.

HEART HISTORIES.

EVERYONE has a history. Our most intimate friends have histories with which, as a general thing, we are familiar. We know of their struggles in life, their success and their failures. Strangers, or those whom we occasionally meet, have histories which often become known to us as they are known to society—to the world. Our life histories are known to our friends and to the circle in which we move. But there are histories of strangers, of friends, and of ourselves which are veiled. Thrilling, deep heart histories are there which everyone has, and which are sealed up from other eyes than our own.

Suppose we could raise the veil which hides the innermost recesses of the heart and gaze upon page after page that is written there; suppose we were allowed to become as familiar with the heart's history as with that of the owner himself, would we find anything strange or startling? As no two have experiences alike in life so would we find a variety in the silent history of the heart.

We might not find anything startling in any heart, but we would find many sad things written there. We should find many experiences which are familiar to our own hearts and which we have carefully concealed, thinking that they were unknown to others. But the strangest feature would be the seeming incompatibility of these pages of the heart with the outside life of the individual; and this is what would so much interest us, for it would tell tales which, could they be written with the pathos which they merit, would cause us to weep with sympathy. Why so sure that we would weep? Because, dear reader, if you will look into the heart of which you alone possess the key you will find that it is only the dark and sad part of your life that is hidden, and so it is with others.

Whenever we are joyous and happy we ask others to share with us, and unfold to them the source of our pleasure. When we meet with success we are proud, and wish the world to know it; but when we fail we try to hide our defeat and shame. And often our grief is too sacred for other eyes to see.

Open the door and raise the curtain of your own

heart, reader, and tell us what you see in proof of what I have said. Do you not see, far back upon its pages, lines of deep sorrow traced? They were put there by the death of your dear little brother whose young life went out so soon. That was unselfish grief, unmingled with thoughts of the world, for you were then young and guileless. Those other lines more deeply traced tell when your mother died. Nothing can blot them out! When you think of her you think how many times you pained her, and how often you brought the sad tears to her eyes. You, alone, feel this and know it, and it is well for you to hide it. You lay upon your pillow at night thinking of her, and longing for the kind words she used to speak, and for her hand to cool your brow. Those around you know nothing of this, or how you mourn for the dear little Eva, who followed mother long ago. This is heart history.

But why do you tremble? Are these memories so sad? No! I see now. Here are other lines that tell secrets that you have long concealed. Yes, here, cut deeply in the page as with a diamond-pointed sorrow, is the tale of your manhood's love and loss. They tell how, in the pride of youthful strength, you wooed, won, and—lost! Lost? Yes, the dream was too bright, too beautiful to last, and like the rainbow on a summer's night, it faded until nothing but a dark cloud was left, and your sun of happiness went down for ever.

Of all your histories this is the one you guard with the greatest care. You would not have it known for the world. By bright smiles and lively sallies of wit you try to make others think you are happy, and you succeed, for they do not know of this. They do not know how you throw yourself upon your bed in the secret of your chamber, and weep that the best love of your heart twined around a worthless object. Every fibre of your soul was linked with hers, and now they are broken. This is heart history.

By the side of this may be a page which you do well to cover up. It may tell of friends whom you have betrayed; of promises broken, and of vows unkept. It may tell how you won a guileless heart only to leave it broken and desolate. Dark things may lie hidden, and we will not look longer.

There may be found aspirations never reached, hopes blasted for ever, desires unsatisfied, longings always to be felt, friendships broken, and love unrequited.

As a beam o'er the face of the waters may glow,

While the tide runs in coldness and darkness below,

So the cheek may be tinged with a warm sunny smile,

While the cold heart, to ruin, runs darkly the while!

H. A. D.

A PECULIAR phenomenon lately occurred in the environs of Stargard, in Prussia, being a rainfall of fishes, not of water. The common opinion is that it was the effect of a waterspout, which drew the inhabitants of a little lake in the neighbourhood from their home, and, carried by the wind, rained them down at Stargard.

FRANKLIN ON RICHES.—The conversation having turned, in presence of Dr. Franklin, upon riches, and a young person in the company expressed his surprise that they ever should be attended with such anxiety and solicitude—giving as an instance one of his old acquaintances, who, though in possession of unbounded wealth, yet was as busy and more anxious than the most assiduous clerk in his counting-house. The doctor took an apple from a fruit-basket, and presented it to a little child, who could scarcely grasp it in his hand. He then gave it another, which occupied the other hand. Then choosing a third, large and beautiful, presented that also. The child, after vainly attempting to hold the three, dropped the last and burst into tears. "See," said the philosopher, "there is a little man with more riches than he can enjoy."

NEW LAW OF AUCTIONS.—This Bill is now law, but so changed that its author refused to recognize it. A "puffer" is defined to be a person appointed to bid on the part of the owner. Sales that would be invalid in law are also to be invalid in equity, removing the conflict between law and equity where a puffer is employed. It is enacted "that the particulars or conditions of sales by auction of any land shall state whether such land will be sold without reserve, or subject to a reserved price, or whether a right to bid is reserved; if it is stated that such land will be sold without reserve, or to that effect, then it shall not be lawful for the seller to employ to bid at such sale, or for the auctioneer to take knowingly any bidding from any such person." The practice of opening biddings by order of the Court of Chancery is to be discontinued, but in all other respects it is to be excepted from the operation of the statute, which does not extend to Scotland. The Act came into operation on the 1st of August.

VIRGINIA.

CHAPTER LX.

As the spring came on this rumour was confirmed by the houses where the wedding paraphernalia was being prepared.

All this time Virginia was a confirmed invalid; she received no company, and heard nothing that was going on in the outside world; those who saw her believed that a few months would end a life that, from no given cause, seemed to have become wearisome to that fair young creature, and was a burden that she would not be long troubled with.

One day, early in the last month of spring, Brian Nolan went from London to see Ellen, who received him upstairs in Virginia's parlour; she, poor girl, was lying feeble and pale on the bed in her own room. But the door was open, and the great house was so still that almost every word could reach her from the parlour.

Ellen had finished her book during the winter and it lay on her desk, sealed up, and she was anxious to put it in some publisher's hands. There was no great vigour of life about Ellen now. Her slight figure had fallen away with constant watching and severe thought; her eyes were almost wild with anxiety, and she was constantly giving little nervous starts, as if apprehending some evil every minute.

"You look ill, Ellen," said Brian, sitting down by the desk.

"No, no; I am not ill, Brian, only it makes me suffer to see her passing away so quietly and so surely."

"Is she no better then?"
"Worse, if anything, Brian."
"Do you know, Ellen—can you guess what it is that preys upon her?"

Brian asked this under his breath. Remember, Cora had denied her identity to him, and had sent down word that she was ill on another occasion. He had seen Virginia at Seymour's residence, and fully believed her to be his wife, pining perhaps to death under the unaccountable absence of her husband.

"Brian, all that ails her is soon told. Among them they have broken her heart."

"Do you think she is so very ill? Will the sweet lady really die?"

"Heaven help us, I dare not ask the question, much less answer it!" said Ellen, beginning to cry.

Brian could not speak openly, he was held down by that solemn promise to his brother. He had been to the prison and came to get news of the woman whom that unhappy convict so thoroughly loved.

"This will be sad, sad news for him," was his silent reflection. "Should she die he will feel the shock through his prison walls. Oh! if I dared say one consoling word to her!"

These were silent thoughts; he would not have spoken them for the world, shackled as he was with the oath of secrecy.

But one thing he could do. Seymour had not altogether forbidden him to make a confidant of Ellen. He would tell her, not about the marriage, but regarding his brother's unhappy condition.

"Ellen," he said, after a prolonged silence, "will you shut that door? I want to say something to you alone."

"She is in there, speak low, I think she is sleeping," said Ellen, closing the door softly and retreating to the farther side of the room. "Now you can tell me, Brian. Is it anything about our brother?"

"Yes, Ellen, I come from him!"

"Come from him? Where is he then?"

"Stoop down your head, sister."

Ellen bent her head, listened, turned deadly white, and stepped back as if he had struck her.

"In prison!—sent there by Clarence Brooks!"

Brian, why was this kept from me so long?"

"He forbade me to tell you, or anyone. It would have done harm."

"But I am his sister."

"And for that reason have enough to bear. Even now I tell you without authority. But for what I have heard to-day I would have still kept silence."

"And this was where he was—this was why he did not need our money. Brian, Clarence Brooks is a villain, a double-dyed villain! I detest him!"

"So did I at first, but after seeing him—Ellen, there is something strange about this. Mr. Brooks does not seem vindictive. He would not accept any portion of the money, though I urged it upon him. He seemed distressed, anxious to make Alfred's life easy where he is. Ellen, at one time I saw tears in that man's eyes."

"Have you seen him more than once?"

"Yes, but not to speak with him. Only last week I saw him riding in the park with Mrs. Lander and the young lady."

"What! Cora Lander?"

"Yes, it is said about the hotels that they are going to be married soon."

Ellen became red and white by turns; thought after thought flashed through her mind. Cora Lander had known her brother. She remembered thinking so at the hotel the first time they all met there. Had she instigated Mr. Brooks to prosecute him as he had done?

There was no chance that an honest mind could follow Cora Lander in her iniquitous scheming, but Ellen jumped at the one broad conclusion that she was at the bottom of all her brother's trouble and of Virginia's sad state.

"That cruel wretch shall not break his heart!" she exclaimed.

Brian thought that she alluded to Clarence Brooks, and answered:

"I do not think it was done from cruelty. This man is not hard-hearted. Something that we do not understand is at the bottom of it all."

"Brian, tell me more of our brother. How many years is it?"

"Seven."

"So many! Let me think—let me think! Oh, if she were well now!"

"That is it. You must keep this from her of all persons in the world."

"We must keep it from everyone, though the secret wears our lives out."

"If she had not been in the danger you speak of I would not have told you."

"I do not understand. My lady has nothing to do with it; she would be sorry of course, but I will not tell her or anyone. Our father left Alfred to us. To save him is the duty of my life."

"Ellen?"

"Well, Brian?"

"I should like to see your lady."

"No wonder, Brian; it would be strange if you did not. She has the loveliest face. I hear her moving. Perhaps she will come out."

She was right; the door opened and Virginia came into the room pale as a lily. Her white merino dress was girded in at the waist by a black ribbon, and a string of jet beads fell from her neck. She had heard his voice and put these things on hurriedly, hoping something from his visit, but without knowing what.

"You have come to see Ellen; I am glad of it," she said, gently, as Brian bowed before the frail creature whom he believed to be his brother's wife.

"Is there any news of her brother yet?"

Brian's face lighted up. Here was a chance of giving her comfort without betraying his knowledge of her secret.

"Yes, we have heard from him; he is well and thinks nothing so important as his return to us."

"But when will he return?"

"Not yet; he cannot tell. But this is certain, his heart is with us."

She smiled faintly at his eagerness, and sat down wearily, supporting her head with one hand.

"I shall write, lady. May I tell him that you remember him kindly?" said Brian, so agitated that his voice shook while uttering words that seemed to him of great importance.

"Yes, say that, for I do remember him very kindly, little as I have seen of him. Ellen's brother, you know, is almost my brother."

"Thank you, he will be pleased. Sister Ellen, good-bye."

"I will go with you, brother. We must not say good-bye so soon."

Ellen walked with her brother down to the station, conversing earnestly with him all the way, and waited till he entered the train.

About a week after this Eunice intercepted Ellen as she was coming in from the garden.

"Come here," she said; "I've got a letter from Mrs. Eliza Lander. Read it, but don't say a word to her."

Ellen read the letter.

It told Eunice, but as a matter to be kept secret in the household, of Cora's approaching marriage.

"Everything is getting ready," it said. "Cora's first year of mourning will be more than over in June, when the wedding will take place at the mansion. She wishes you to have the house put into perfect order. Hire extra help, and tell the gardener to employ more men if the grounds require it. The wedding will be a grand one, and some of the first people in the land will be present. There is one thing that troubles my niece, and I share her anxiety. What can be done with my—Virginia and her uncouth friend? If she would only consent to live in London. Cora has such a lovely house; it belonged to Mr. Lander; she will give her a deed of it, if that will suit her for a residence. She can choose her own servants, and have some agreeable elderly person to live with her. The house has

been beautifully fitted up, Cora tells me, especially for her cousin. I have been over it, and it is superb. There is a woman in charge now, but Cora will send her away and let her cousin engage whom she likes. I think this very liberal—don't you, Eunice? If you like it, would you object to speaking to her about the arrangement? Now that a strange gentleman is coming into the family it seems necessary that something should be done. I wouldn't speak to her myself about it, nor would Cora, she is so sensitive; but you will not mind it, I am sure, Eunice. Do try and get that hunchbacked girl to favour this measure. She can do anything with Virginia."

E. LANDER.
"What do you think of that?" cried Eunice, when Ellen had read the letter through. "Mrs. Lander's conduct is disgusting! Don't look at me, I'm blushing all over for her. It's scandalous!"

"Still my young lady must go. It would kill her to remain here."

"But it is turning her out of doors."

"She will go, Eunice, I am sure of that. But she has some money. We raised it on those jewels—bless you for getting them—and I can work."

"Work! You! why you couldn't iron a pocket-handkerchief without being tired."

"But I can write."

"Why that ain't work."

"I fancy you would think it was, Eunice, if you had it to do."

"Why, you strange girl, I thought you was a doing it for fun!"

"Fun," answered Ellen, smiling wearily, for this hard writing had worn her out; "see how my hand trembles, feel how hot my head is. This is severe fun, Eunice!"

"And what's the good of worrying yourself so? I ain't seen nothing come of it but a heap of paper with writing on."

"You may be right. After all my toil it may be worth nothing," answered Ellen, who had arisen from that pile of manuscript so depressed and exhausted that even such criticism as Eunice could give discouraged her. "But I have tried so hard! Besides, she would be disappointed!"

"Will she? Don't let anything I've said discourage you, for I know no more about writing than a straw. I wish I never had learned anything, so does Josh, though we ain't either on us much to brag of."

CHAPTER LX.

EUNICE was going into the house after this speech, but Ellen followed her.

"Eunice, will you give me that letter?" she said.

"Not to show her. I tell you that girl shan't leave this house without she wants to of her own accord. Nobody on this earth shall drive her away."

"But she will not remain after this—after her cousin comes back."

"Ellen Nolan, there's one thing that weighs heavily on Josh's and my mind. You sent a letter once down to the tavern from her, and that Mr. Brooks sent one back again. Besides, Josh says that the men about the tavern say that you were there one night to see him. Now were you?"

"Eunice, please don't question me about that. It is all over now."

"Ellen, you are a good girl, and I won't. But tell me one thing; you may, for I don't know anything more about love than I do about writing; but did he try to make her like him and then treat her bad, going over to t'other? He's a man, and it's in 'em I know."

"Eunice, please oblige me. Don't talk of her, only to decide what is for the best. She's very feeble, and the least excitement may throw her upon a sick-bed again. If nothing had happened we should have gone away. This life is terrible."

"Not without she wants to; remember Josh and I are agreed on that."

"But it is impossible to stay—the—the—conclusion would kill her. Think of some quiet place that she can live in, where no trouble can come."

"I'll think it over. But it's a burning shame."

"Somewhere in some secluded spot, or in some pleasant and cheerful family," said Ellen, faltering in the last part of her sentence, while the colour came into her face.

"I know a widow about four or five miles off, and as kind as kind can be. Sometimes she takes one of two boarders. I'll send Josh to see about it if you wish it, and she will go."

"Do, Eunice; let him start at once."

"It ain't so far off that I can't come and see you now and then."

"I hope not, Eunice, for you have been a good friend to her."

"No, I haven't—more shame to me—but I wanted to be. You don't know how both Josh and I wanted

to be her friend but couldn't. Are you going? Do you want the letter?"

"No, I can tell her—it only takes a few words." Half an hour after this Joshua was at the station waiting for a train, and Ellen sat in Virginia's bedroom with both her arms around the invalid, striving to arouse her from the state of apathy into which she had fallen.

"Oh, darling lady, make an effort and cry; a few tears will make your heart easier. Look up, look up, and say I haven't killed you with the news!" Virginia heard this appeal through all her benumbed senses.

She raised her head and smiled in Ellen's face—one of the most pitiful smiles that ever parted human lips.

"Ellen, you told me of this, but I would not be warned."

"Sweet lady—dear lady, cast him from your mind. He is cruel, dishonourable, vile! Unworthy of your regret."

"No, Ellen; you wrong Clarence, wrong me, if you think I can believe such things of him. It is my cousin—I will not curse her, or blame him. Let us go away, my friend. You are right, let us go away. She took my inheritance and I was powerless to defend myself. She has taken the heart from my bosom now and crushed my life. Still I am powerless. But some day he will learn the truth, whatever that wicked truth may be; then she will suffer as I do. I do not ask it—I do not wish it, but heaven is above all."

A fortnight after Virginia Lander heard of the wedding which was to drive her from her father's roof, a little figure, whose deformed shoulders were but half concealed under a circular mantle of black silk, entered one of the principal publishing-houses with a paper parcel under her arm, for it was too heavy for her weak hands.

The vast room which she entered was lined with placards of various publications, divided into compartments by stands, crowded with specimen books, and scattered over with desks, each of which represented a department of that vast establishment.

A large portion of the front of this room was divided off from the stairs and main apartment by a light wooden railing, it was covered with a well-trodden carpet, with some desks and office chairs, all appropriated by the heads of the great firm, which had existed since the eldest partner was a little child. They were all kindly looking men, who found their greatest happiness in that brotherly society which was all sufficient; still they were at all times ready to give a cordial greeting and kindly advice to anyone who came to them either in friendship or on business.

It so happened that all the partners were present at the moment Ellen Nolan entered the room.

Genius may be modest and shrinking, but it is seldom at a loss for the best means of attaining a proper object.

These men were all strangers to Ellen, but her earnest face and easy movements won upon them at first sight.

The tallest and eldest of these gentlemen arose to meet her, glanced at the parcel under her arm and directed her to another pleasant-faced man, who sat by a desk, leaning back in his office chair, calmly smoking a cigar, which he threw out of the window as she came up.

This man, with a smile that brightened Ellen's face as if by a reflected sunbeam, reached forth his hand for the parcel, simply saying:

"Is it a book?"

Ellen sighed heavily as she gave up her manuscript.

It had been so long a part of her life that she shrank from the separation when it came, as an artist hates to sell the picture which is the embodiment of a beautiful idea.

"Yes, sir, it is a book—a novel."

He looked at her with kindly interest. Her bright face, and, more than that, her deformity, aroused his sympathy.

The man of business saw genius in that face—and the man of feeling pitied one whom heaven had so endowed and yet left imperfect.

"Your first, of course?"

"Yes, the first I ever attempted."

Ellen was trembling all over now. It seemed as if half her strength had been taken away with the manuscript.

"Leave it, if you like. We will submit it to our reader."

Ellen, of course, supposed that her book would be given over to the judgment of some great author, capable of doing at least all that she could accomplish, and gave it up with a sort of awe, for there is no reverence in life so fervent as that which genius yields to genius.

I do not know how it was with this firm, but had

she known that, in a majority of cases, her manuscript would have been given to some pretender to literature or favourite friend of the publisher, or literary amateur trying his hand at paraphrasing for the first time, she might have had less reverence and more apprehension. As it was she felt certain that the ideas which had thrilled through her whole being in the progress of that book would meet with kindred appreciation in some powerful mind, and was content.

So Ellen left her book and went back to the little farm-house, where Virginia was longing for her presence as only the suffering and feeble can long for companionship. The home which these girls had chosen presented a great contrast to the noble mansion they had left; yet it was a pleasant residence; neat, old-fashioned, and shaded with a huge walnut-tree, which was just putting forth its most delicate green. Quantities of daffodils, jonquils, and snowdrops brightened the front garden. Peach and cherry trees were in full blossom, and the great lilac bushes under the parlour windows were budding with a famous promise of flowers.

Humble as all this was, it seemed to those girls far pleasanter than that splendid house, with its discord and painful restraints. Virginia had brightened a little under the comfort and freedom of her new home. The wholesome scent of the flowers and walnut-trees awoke sensations of pleasure unknown to her former luxurious life. She sought the open air now, and could ramble about at will without fear of meeting her worst enemies. It was a new life in which she was becoming interested; the languor and illness which had kept her indoors all the winter became less and less apparent every day.

One morning Joshua came riding towards the house, leading Snowball by the bridle.

"I brought her down because the doctor ordered it."

Ellen thanked him cordially. Virginia was looking out of the window with something like animation. Snowball seemed an old friend to her, in spite of the memories she aroused.

"Yes, Joshua, I will promise to ride her; the beauty, see how she paws the turf. Tell Eunice how pleasant everything is here—how much we like Mrs. Rice. I am getting quite strong, as you see."

"Well, yes, you do look better, mamma. But it's getting pleasant up our way too. I was in the grounds yesterday, putting things to rights about the little summer-house. That big chestnut-tree is putting out the heaviest grist of leaves I ever saw, and the vines are all green about the bridge? But what do you think I found in the summer-house? Nearly half a bushel of chestnuts heaped up in one corner. Been there all the winter and nobody touched 'em. Curious, wasn't it?"

Virginia's animation was all gone now; she sat down in a chair by the window, panting for breath.

"Well," said Joshua, unconscious of the mischief he had done, "I suppose I must be a going. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Joshua," said Ellen, following the kind fellow from the room. "When is it to be?"

"Next month, early, I suppose, by the orders we get. Eunice told me to tell you she thought so. A pair of handsome carriage-horses came yesterday, and a new barouche. The stables won't hold 'em if she keeps on."

Ellen went back to the house. She had not yet told Virginia that her cousin's marriage was so near at hand. Indeed they seldom talked upon the subject now. It was too seriously painful.

"Ellen," said Virginia when her friend came in, "after it is all over, tell me."

You would have thought from the intense pallor of her face that it was the execution of some friend she was speaking of.

"I will," said Ellen, in a low voice. "It is not yet."

Virginia drew a struggling breath, and no more was said.

She had seen Ellen talking with Joshua, and divined the subject of their conversation.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE Home Secretary was alone one day, when his secretary came in, followed by a little creature that would have appeared like a child but for her face, which possessed a wonderful power of expression, such as only thought and experience can impart.

This young creature went up to where he sat, and, leaning on the table with one arm, looked earnestly into his face—so earnestly that the colour mounted faintly over it.

"I have a brother," said Ellen Nolan, "my eldest brother; he has committed a crime, and they have put him in prison. If he were innocent, I would ask your pardon as a right, but, knowing him guilty, I have come here to beg mercy for him. My

father, sir, is dead; he was lost in a steamer burned on the ocean more than a year ago. With his last words he bade me fill his place to this unhappy son, and I promised. Sir, my brother is ill; I fear his mind is becoming disturbed. He will die if you leave him there."

That earnest face, those eyes so full of deep, deep feeling, had more power upon the Secretary than this broken speech, which seemed to come in gasps from her chest.

"Have you a memorial?"

"I have no petition."

"No petition—no letters?"

"I am a stranger, sir, and do not know how these things are done. Yesterday I was in the prison for the first time; for I had been again and again and they refused to let me in. I found him alone in his cell, burning with fever, wild with distress. The very sight of me drove him half frantic. He is an educated man, who has committed one grave fault, but there is no real wickedness in him. If ever a man was sorry for wrong-doing he is. I know he has done a dishonest thing, but he says it was under a terrible temptation, and I believe him. You would believe him, sir, if you had held his poor, shaking hands and looked into his eyes, as I did. Oh, sir, I wish you could see him. It would melt your heart. My father loved him so dearly; knowing all his faults, he could understand how a man might do wrong, and yet not be so very bad. This is all the plea I have to make. If you keep him there he will die, and my promise, given to a father who was about entering the gates of heaven, will go unredeemed."

The Minister, who was a kind and most lenient man, listened to the girl with great patience. Her energy, that broken language, which was half explanation, half petition, all unstudied and earnest as a child pleads, took him by surprise.

He asked her to sit down, but she would not. Supporting herself with one arm, she still kept her eyes on his face, looking, as it were, deep into his heart.

The magnetism of a brain and heart like hers, determined on one purpose, is more powerful with sympathetic men than argument or prayers; her entreaties moved that man's heart to mercy.

He took Ellen's hand.

She seemed so small and helpless that it was like encouraging a child.

He asked her questions, and listened to the whole story as she had told it to Virginia months before. When she came to the robbery her voice faltered and her eyes fell; that painful truth brought the crimson of deep shame into her white cheeks. He was guilty, she owned, but not so guilty as might be thought.

He positively believed his friend to be dead, and in an indirect way that friend had almost promised the money, and more than that to him. It was all wrong—terribly wrong.

This was touching and pathetic; but a Minister cannot always listen to the pleadings of his own heart.

He became uneasy under the gaze of those wistful eyes that shed no tears, but were all the more powerful for that, and at last broke off the conversation rather coldly.

It was impossible, he said, to listen to a petition which had really nothing but sisterly affection to recommend it. It grieved him to say this, but it seemed to him impossible to act otherwise.

He shook hands with the poor girl kindly, but, chilled to the heart by his words, she went away with a feeling akin to death.

Virginia knew nothing of this. She thought Ellen was busy at her book, and asked her about it when she came home at night, looking so tired and careworn.

This reminded Ellen that the week was more than expired. In her anxiety regarding her brother she had forgotten everything, even that precious manuscript.

The next day she went to town and came home radiant with joy. Her manuscript was accepted with warm praise. In a few weeks it would be published.

"Now," she said, stealing an arm around Virginia's neck as she told her the news, "now we shall be independent."

"Ah, how happy you look, Ellen! No wonder! You have done so much, while I have accomplished nothing and have no hope. Oh, Ellen, I tried to sing while you were away, and could not. My voice is gone!"

"That is because you have been so ill, dear lady. It will come back sweeter than ever; if not my book will sell. I can write more, and that will be enough for us both. This is independence, lady!"

Virginia returned her kisses with heartfelt warmth. She loved the generous girl well enough to take even money from her without a sense of obligation wounding her pride, and that is the greatest test of a mag-



[AN ALTERATION NEEDED.]

nanimous nature which a human being can be capable of in this degenerate age.

"What is the difference?" said Ellen, delighted that she could do something for her lady. "Did I not love to receive everything from you? Oh! I'm so thankful that it is my turn now!"

CHAPTER LXII.

CORA LANDER had been a great deal into society during the latter part of her season in town. With her great beauty and reputation for enormous wealth there was no difficulty in taking her position in fashionable life. It came and lay down at her feet. Hundreds of the most select followed her and her bridegroom to that mansion, where the marriage ceremony was to be performed with a splendour that had never been witnessed before. A glorious moon shed its brightest rays on that clear summer evening, and shone like quicksilver across the river as the train passed swiftly. The sound of laughter and low, sweet voices softened the noise of the engine and the rattle of wheels to those within the carriages, and that wedding party was whirled onward almost with the speed of lightning.

All at once that white house, with all its stately trees, drooping shubbery and clustering vines, illuminated as with ten thousand stars, burst upon the view.

The marble colonnade shone out clear and distinct, its fluted pillars well defined, and entwined, as it were, with wreaths of fire.

The roses were in full bloom, filling the air with fragrance; the fruit-trees which grew near were lighted up, and their blossoms fell around the hanging lamps like garlands of snow. From the terrace stairs to the front of the building a broad pathway of crimson carpeting was laid, bordered on each side with greenhouse plants, so thickly placed that it seemed one mass of flowers from the steps to the colonnade.

Within everything was in stately keeping with the exterior; all the rooms, on which Mrs. Lander had lavished so much money, were thrown open. The air penetrated there through folds of lace. Some were brilliantly lighted, others were left in a soft moonlight obscurity, inviting repose.

The colours in each room contrasted or harmonized with the next so imperceptibly that they could hardly be separated in the mind, but composed one grand picture of light, rich colouring and artistic effect.

Soon the company began entering the rooms,

chatting, laughing, brilliant with expectation, it only added a movement of graceful life without in the least crowding them.

The beautiful women moving in and out seemed like lost Paris who had found a new way back to Paradise and were rejoicing over it.

This crowd of gay visitors had assembled rather early, scattering themselves about the rooms and the grounds as previously arranged.

The ceremony would not take place before eleven o'clock.

The whole affair was, in fact, one grand reception. Mrs. Lander received the guests in a dress of silver gray satin, that trailed along the carpet with an elegant train.

She had thrown aside her nervousness and entered fully into a scene which was her highest idea of happiness.

While all this fashion and beauty were passing in and out of the lower rooms Cora stood in the chamber of which she had so ruthlessly defrauded her cousin, ready for her second marriage.

Excitement had rendered her more than usually beautiful; her cheeks were suffused with rose-tints; her rich tresses, drawn back from her forehead, were fairly entrancing.

The satin robe fell around her as snow falls to the ground, and swept the floor in long sumptuous folds. She held the bridal veil in her hand and was directing the attendant how to arrange it in her hair with perfect art and seeming negligence, when a servant knocked at the door.

"See what it is," she said, "surely it cannot be time."

The woman opened the door and brought back a note, which the servant said a strange man had delivered, with directions that it should be given into her own hands at once.

Cora tore the note open impatiently; she was annoyed by the delay it occasioned. This was the contents:

"I AM at the summer-house waiting for you. If you fail to come at once, I shall stand by your side at eleven o'clock. YOUR HUSBAND."

Cora Lander neither fainted away nor uttered one sound of the terrible dread that seized upon her. She folded the note and held it firmly in her hand. Then, turning to the woman, she bade her unlace the corsage of her dress, it was rather tight, and she would let the dressmaker, who was in attendance, alter it a little, as there was plenty of time. She took up her watch from the dressing-table and made sure of this. It was about ten o'clock.

The woman obeyed, and in a few moments Cora emerged from these voluminous folds of satin as if she had just escaped from a snow-drift.

"Shall I take the dress to Mrs. Green?" inquired the maid.

"Yes, tell her to enlarge it a little. Give me that scarf, I will attend to something else while she finishes it. These hair-dressers tire one to death. I will ring when you are wanted again."

The woman retired, carrying the dress carefully on her arm. The moment she was gone Cora stepped into the next room, snatched up the dress she had flung off before commencing her toilet, and put it on. Across one of the chairs hung a lace shawl, which she had worn in the grounds that afternoon. She threw this over her head, gathering it up in folds about her bosom, which scarcely seemed to rise or fall with human life.

The last thing she did in that room was to open a drawer of the dressing-table and take out a small pistol, scarcely larger than a toy, which had been given her at a pistol manufactory as a beautiful specimen of workmanship, once when Amos Lander had taken her and Virginia there. It was loaded, for one day she had given it to Josh Hurd to put in order, and he sent it back ready for use. She put this in her pocket, and now her voice was heard for the first time since the maid went out.

"I will kill him. If he attempts it, I will kill him!"

You would not have known that voice—you would hardly have recognized the woman's face as she went out of her chamber and passed down a flight of back-stairs leading to a passage-way near the kitchen.

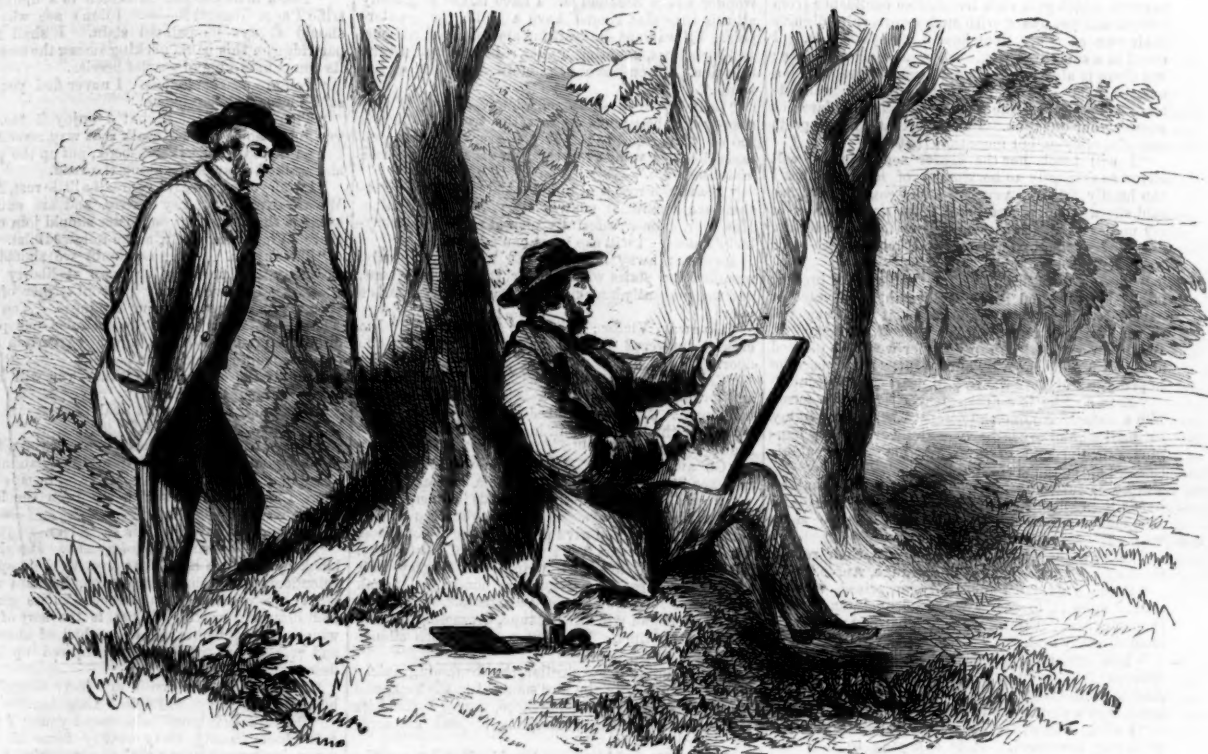
Once in the open air, she paused, holding her breath, if indeed she could be said to breathe at all.

The grounds were filled with her wedding guests, who were walking, chatting, or gathering roses in the beautiful light which fell around them, half moonbeams and half fire.

She drew the black lace folds over her head and took a somewhat shady course by the stables.

A man was waiting for her in the summer-house, his face as he looked out of the window expressive of fixed and terrible purpose. Not twenty-four hours before he had been in prison, but the Home Secretary had been haunted by the words and looks of that hunchbacked girl so persistently that his great, generous heart spoke out in spite of legal forms, and a pardon set the young man free.

(To be continued.)



[VICTOR FINDS AMYAS AT WORK.]

AMYAS AYRE.

CHAPTER VI.

"THAT means Barbara Leighton, of course," replied Victor, "no one else aspires to her sort of accepta. What can induce her to condescend to such an humble, insignificant sphere as this? It is not for the love of her long-forgotten relatives I am positive."

"Now, don't be uncharitable, Victor. You know how courted and petted she has been. I've no doubt it is true, as her letter says, that this is the very first time she has been able to escape from her engagements to come to us. But think what an addition she will be to our summer festivities; what grace and polish Annie and I may acquire in such grand company. And, oh, by the way, Mr. Granger is coming down to the Sportsman, with a party of gentlemen, so we shall be likely to catch a glimpse of him."

"Hum! Mr. Granger? Oh, yes. I remember. Our cousin's fiancé. Very wealthy, is he not? travelled and learned, and all that sort of thing? I've never met him, but I've heard some romantic story about him which I can't for the life of me recall. Well, Rosebud, you are right; all this influx into our quiet town will stir it up amazingly. Annie, don't look so like a stately Nelly, or I won't promise but that you'll win away the grand Mr. Granger from our brunetted cousin Barbara. As for Rosebud here, I know very well what merciless plans have already entered into her pretty head; that train of gentlemen coming here with Mr. Arnold Granger for game had better look to their armour instead of their weapons. Some people take higher mark than birds. I foresee an infinite series of disasters!"

"Don't you find any personal interest in the matter?" asked Rose Ingalls, with a momentary gleam of vexation flitting across her face. "Barbara tells of half a dozen of her fair lady friends who intend to escape from the fashionable watering-places to be within the circle of this charming coterie. You may meet your own fate, Victor."

The young man shrugged his shoulders, ran his fingers lightly through his fair, clustering curls, and then answered, with a look of serious gravity:

"He who has been once wounded is invulnerable to farther shafts, my Rose. Would not your tender heart by solicitude on my account. I am invulnerable; let their powerless missiles fly."

Rose tried to answer playfully, but her voice trembled slightly.

"I wonder whence came the shaft that wounded. This is our very first hint of such a catastrophe. How comes it that you have belied your name? or is the matter still unsettled? Answer frankly, Sir Victor, noble cousin mine."

"When I have my answer ready you shall know it, Rosebud. But don't you know that there are some shrines you must approach as reverently and charily as if you were asking for a star to be plucked from the heavens, or were begging the purest diamond from the monarch's crown, and feel yourself more daring and presumptuous in asking for a heart's love than for either of the other comparatively worthless treasures?"

"I understand," said Rose, bending over the flower-stand, so that the flush on her cheeks could not be seen. "You are thinking about Amy Ayre. You and Annie are always thinking about the Ayres."

Annie at these words made a precipitate retreat, looking more like a rose than a lily. But Victor stood his ground, and, with a sweet, grave smile overspreading his face, turned, and said, earnestly:

"And why not, Rosebud? Could we think of any half so amiable, refined, and genius-gifted?"

"I suppose not," answered Rose, still handling the green leaves, as if in search of some blighting insect, "if it will only end favourably. I only wish you knew more about them, Victor."

"I wish I knew if there were any hope for me with Amy," said Victor Haldeman. "Tell me candidly what you think about it, Rose."

The girl's eyes were still downcast, and Victor never imagined that the drooping lashes hid the rising tears, nor marked the tremulous flutter of the white throat, but the voice was steady enough which replied:

"Candidly, Victor, I think Amyas enjoys Annie's society far more than his sister cares for yours. She never seems quite herself when you express your admiration so plainly. Remember, you asked for my true opinion."

"Of course I did, and I know you are right with regard to that little embarrassment of hers. I have pondered over it. But I thought, I hoped it might only be maidenly confusion at the discovery of the secret which you admit I betray every time I am in her presence. I wish, Rosebud, you had been in love yourself, and then you might be able to tell me some of the symptoms; though who knows if common rules would apply to such a sweet, yet sensitive and shy nature as that of Amy Ayre?"

Rose Ingalls closed her white teeth under her red,

smiling lips, with the desperate determination to hide her pain, and keep her face from betraying all her writhing heart was suffering, yet it was some little time ere she was able to answer, in calm tones:

"I should be very glad to help you if I could, Victor. But, indeed, my judgment is by no means infallible. 'Faint heart never won fair lady' was always your motto, and you have this halcyon summer time before you. Now I must go in and consult my wardrobe, and its needs, in anticipation of this gay company. I have my own conquests to look after."

She passed around the veranda, and entered the house by the side door, gliding softly by the sitting-room and hurrying up to the solitude of her private room; there the unshed tears were allowed to fall.

Rose Ingalls, the pretty heiress of a snug little fortune left entirely to her own management, sat down by the window, and murmured, disconsolately:

"What a cross-grained world this is! There is young Mr. Weston sighing his life out for Annie, who has thought only for Amyas Ayre. And there is Mr. Armitage, who would give half his fortune for an old glove of mine, and I, foolish girl that I am, can only see perfection in one whose every aspiration turns to Amy Ayre, and who, if I am not strangely mistaken, cares no more for Victor Haldeman than for this Mr. Arnold Granger, who is coming amongst us. Heigho! I hope matters are arranged between Barbara and her lover. Another ill-assortment would fairly destroy my faith in happy love."

And thereupon she burst into laughter, and then began again to weep.

Meantime, below, in the pretty little parlour behind the veranda, Victor Haldeman had drawn his sister into a *tête-à-tête*.

"Annie darling, now we are in for it, that is, as Rose has broken the ice, why not face the matter bravely, and find out our position?"

Annie smiled archly, though she hid her blushing face farther from observation.

"There is little need of making any observation in your case, Victor. If love have an equator, you are there, and as for your longitude, you must reckon according to your distance from or closeness to the Ayre cottage and that dear, sweet Amy."

"To be sure; that's my position, pet, but it is about Amy's I would consult star, sun, and friendly chart. If I could only have the faintest hope she cared for me now, or would ever care for me—"

Annie's faint sigh came before her words.

"They are peculiar people, Victor. It seems to me I never before saw two such earnest, enthusiastic natures, which gain such irresistible confidence from others, and yet guard with such sweet, calm dignity their own secrets. Somehow I always feel as if I stood in a sacred vestibule when in their presence; but there is always an inner shrine before which a curtain hangs, and I please myself with vain attempts to picture the glories therein. I dare not answer your question. I am sure that Amy respects and admires you, but more than that—"

"I will teach her the dearer sentiment. I will strive so earnestly to be worthy of her love that I can hardly fail," returned Victor, eagerly. "Rose said she was more certain of Amy's tolerance of my undisguised attachment. How is it, Annie, my darling? Would you make him happy with your warm heart's devotion?"

"That is a question, Victor, not even a brother may ask," returned Annie Haldeman, in a voice of gentle reproach. "Nay, nor can it be answered to my own heart until Amy herself has asked it. But I am wondering if my father would be pleased should you obtain Amy's consent. I am sure he hoped you and Rose would join hearts and fortunes."

"Rose? She is a dear, good girl, but she seems like a sister. No one can compare with Amy in my estimation, and my father would never ruin my happiness for the sake of gratifying his pride or ambition. I am confident of that."

"To be sure. It has troubled me a little that he heeds the foolish rumours floating around the place. It is singular that the Ayres never exchange visits with any but ourselves."

"Because they know we appreciate their refinement and genius. That is not strange, Annie."

"Perhaps not, but I am really surprised, when I reflect upon it, to see how our acquaintance with them ripened. I think we were charmed with them from the very first."

"Yes, certainly, because they were so entirely different from all the others of our acquaintance. And then the fact that they, like ourselves, were twins was a strong bond of interest."

"I wish, Victor, their mysterious habits were not so freely discussed. It is annoying to hear the rumours spread abroad—"

"It does not annoy me. Their secret is their own, and they have a right to keep it. They say honourably and fearlessly that there is one, and farther than that no one has a right to question. If anything I honour them the more for it, especially for the frank acknowledgment that there is something in their life which people are not to investigate. I hope this influx of fine visitors will not interrupt our acquaintance with them."

"I should be vexed if it were so, and yet—"

Annie Haldeman paused, and a faint blush came across her fair cheek as she added:

"These gay people who are coming are reported to be invincible. Barbara, we know, holds queenly sway wherever she goes, and Mr. Arnold Granger must be very superior to have won so fastidious and courted a belle. What if they should throw such plain country people as we are into the shade—what then, Victor?"

"They shan't disturb the happiness of the Ayres. I'll watch jealously for that," replied Victor, thoughtfully. "But if Barbara Leighton and this Mr. Granger are lovers they ought to be absorbed in each other's society, and leave other people unmolested."

"I think that is hardly possible for Barbara. She was never at rest if there was a single gentleman in her circle who refused to submit to her fascinations. I think she will be inclined to try her spells upon Amy Ayre, even though Mr. Granger be present."

"I don't know about that, Annie. The idea of tall, queenly Barbara coquetting with that slight, boyish, modest Amyas is rather ridiculous."

"It is exactly such a poetic, dreamy nature that attracts these coquettes. There is a finer fascination in watching the effect of such subtle, wicked arts upon a refined spirit like his than upon common, coarser men. I cannot tell why, but somehow I have a premonition that this visit of Mr. Arnold Granger with Barbara will make some great change here."

"Their causes are very weak, Annie, who would shrink from every trial. I am willing they should be tested, even though it ruins my hopes. I shall invite the Ayres to be present when the grand people arrive. And I hope, darling, you will not demur."

As he spoke Victor Haldeman kissed the fair cheek nestling so closely to his.

"Certainly I shall not," replied Annie, a little proudly; "it was only on their own account that I foreboded harm. What an odd conversation this has been. No one but you, Victor, could ever have obtained so close an insight into my inner life."

"And am I not your other self, your twin-brother?"

It will indeed be a sorry day, Annie, when you and I refuse to share each other's secrets. And now I wonder where Rosebud is. I have talked so gravely all this time that I must have a frolic for counterpoise. I'll warrant she is sitting amidst laces, ribbons, and furbelows, counting up her resources against the invasion. I'll endeavour to obtain my share of the spoils."

"Leave poor Rose alone, Victor. There is that rose-tree to be trained against the trellis. Mark is too busy to attend to it. If you are not going out, assist him. I want everything in order before these visitors arrive."

"Leave the rose, and tend to the tree? Your directions are somewhat contradictory, fair sister mine. However, I am wonderfully keen at riddles, as everybody knows. I will see what can be done."

He went away into the hall whistling merrily, mounted the stairs with two or three flying leaps, and was presently knocking furiously at Rose Ingalls's door.

"Go away, Victor; I can't be teased now. I'm cross," answered his cousin, without opening the door.

"Cross! Humph! a rose with thorns! Come out and let me see if you are a briar-rose. What has happened? Maybe stupid Janet has spoilt your laces? or the lavender silk has met with a misfortune? Heartrending!"

"Go away, Victor. I wish you would leave me in peace!" said the suppressed voice, half crying.

"Now I am sure something serious has happened. I am anxious to know. I shall never recover my equanimity until you give me a glimpse of your face, for I begin to fear it is some personal misfortune. You haven't discovered a wrinkle, or a gray hair now when these fine people are coming? Speak quickly, Rosebud, and relieve my fears."

And he began whistling a tune, drumming on the door to keep time. There was an ominous silence within.

The humming grew shriller, the drumming quickened, and presently the key sounded in the lock, and a crack disclosed the face of Rose, trying to hold its stern look, but already dimpling beneath his arch, mischievous smile.

"Queen Rose, I kiss your hand! You see me like another Sinbad, shipwrecked at your palace-gate."

CHAPTER VII.

ONE afternoon, about ten days later than the date of the last chapter, Victor Haldeman, strolling carelessly along the retired lane which shortened the distance between his father's office and their picturesque country seat, encountered a slender youth sitting on a grassy bank, his sketch-book on his knee, and working away industriously upon a pretty landscape, which he was transferring to the paper with swift and spirited strokes.

Victor's face brightened, and he hurried forward. "Good-day to you, sir artist. I am rejoiced to meet you at last. We fancied you had taken a vow against appearing again at Ingleside. We have scarcely seen you or your sister this week."

The artist lifted his head, and showed a fine face, with clear, luminous eyes, and cheeks tinted, almost like a girl's, with the freshest rose colour. A soft black moustache and bushy whiskers relieved a countenance that would otherwise have seemed effeminate, with its delicate features and sensitive mouth. He did not look more than twenty-one or two, but his manner, which was eminently composed and self-possessed, gave assurance of maturer age. He put aside his sketch-book, came forward with an outstretched hand, and answered, pleasantly:

"We held a consultation on the matter, and Amy and I concluded it would not harm us to try a little quiet. If anything should take us away from your charming family we should find our lonely life tenfold more insupportable. And on that principle of political economy which prepares for possible exigencies, we determined to wean ourselves from Ingleside."

"What could come between us?" said Victor, reproachfully; "indeed, Amyas, that is the very poorest of all reasons."

"The experiment has not amounted to much. I discover that by my delight in this accidental meeting. The ladies are well, I trust, at Ingleside."

"Quite well, I thank you, but pray tell me if your extraordinary and foolish experiment has come to an end now."

Amyas Ayre laughed merrily.

"I think it has. A hermit's life is extremely unnatural, and but for your kind family we should be hermits indeed. But somehow it did not seem as if we ought to trespass upon your generosity so unsparringly."

"The favour is bestowed upon us. The girls enjoy so thoroughly your sister's society she cannot

think their welcome feigned. You are sketching to-day?"

"Yes, a little companion sketch to a dining-room trifle I sent General R—. I don't see why game should always be painted slain. I shall have a partridge on this bank, pecking among the moss, with its companion vine of scarlet berries."

"You are so industrious. I never find you idle," said Victor, half enviously.

"There is need of it, but I enjoy it too. Are you going home? I will walk that way myself."

And he closed the sketch-book, put up the pencils, and walked a few steps along the road.

"I wish you would give yourself a little rest, Amyas. We are expecting a gay coterie, and are extremely anxious that you and your sister should join us," observed Victor, earnestly, as he followed him.

"Thank you. I have no doubt we should enjoy it. Amy will probably be more at liberty than I shall be. But events may prevent either of us, or both, from accepting your kindness. You know, Victor, we never attempt to disguise our peculiar circumstances. We can never be certain of our freedom from retirement at home."

"But if there be no hindrance, you will come?" asked his companion, eagerly.

"Certainly, with a great deal of pleasure. Only look at the sky, Haldeman."

"Very charming. I mean to show you a fit subject for your artistic admiration. You can make her Zenobia or Cleopatra. A relative of ours is coming from London who has hitherto been the belle of all the watering-places."

Amyas Ayre shrugged his shoulders.

"I am afraid of that kind of woman. Has she great black eyes which bewilder you with their sparkling splendour, a striking complexion, brilliant red and pearly white, and hair magnificent in its glossiness and luxuriant wealth? That is the sort of woman which rises up before me, in a whirl of shenny silk, and velvet, and costly laces, conjured up by your description."

"Admirable! you could not have described her better if you had seen Barbara Leighton."

"Barbara Leighton!" ejaculated young Ayre, the soft bloom fading away swiftly from his cheek; "you don't mean to say that she is coming here?"

"She certainly is. And you know her then?—how strange!"

The youth had turned a little aside. He clenched his hand, and set his teeth savagely a moment, ere he replied:

"I have met the lady. Is she married yet?"

"No, but she is engaged to the wealthy Mr. Granger. I am afraid you did not like Barbara."

"Like would be a tame word, Haldeman. The fair lady might choose a different one. At all events, it is no merit of hers that I had not, long ago, blown out my brains from foolish, insane love. Do you know anything about such women, Victor? If you do not, be warned by me in season. Their imperious vanity is not satisfied with the devotion of one; they demand the enslavement of all within reach of their glittering eyes. I was only a poor boy, but she had no pity. This lover was away, I suppose, and she chose to keep herself in practice. She was in the country for her health, where I was staying for my painting lessons from a generous artist. No other game was at hand, and so all the diamond-tipped arrows were levelled at my unsophisticated heart. I need not describe all the pretty ways and arts that led me on. Enough that, when I made bold to speak a few plain words, she opened those lustrous eyes of hers, protested her grief at the misunderstanding, and showed me her betrothal ring. Such a poor, mean, false nature as dwells beneath that fair exterior! And men will still be cheated by it."

These words were spoken in a tone of intense bitterness, and then he turned impulsively to his companion.

"Haldeman, don't be deceived. Make the most of such sweet, true, noble natures as those of your sister and Rose Ingalls, and you will be saved from shipwreck. It cuts me to the heart to think of such a bright, happy disposition as yours being ruined by the wiles of a coquette."

"There is no danger. There is a counter-charm to destroy such uncanny spells. I think, myself, we are two fortunate fellows to enjoy such close intimacy with three such true and lovely maidens as your sister, Annie, and Rose. I wish, Amyas, you would let me tell you all I think of Amy, my hopes and fears. You would know then that there is no harm for me from Barbara Leighton's power. Let me tell you all."

Amyas Ayre put out his delicate hand with a restraining gesture, as he answered, hastily:

"I wish you would not, Victor. To tell the truth it has been a dim suspicion of what you hint at now that has kept us away. It is our misfortune to be

surrounded by very peculiar circumstances. I have known this long while that it was my duty to go away, but it was so peaceful and happy here, it was like tearing asunder my heartstrings, and I foolishly lingered. We can be happy in friendship with your family, but the thought of a closer tie will only separate us."

"I do not understand you. Does Amy—" began Victor, his frank face clouded over, his lip trembling slightly.

Amyas Ayre broke off a dry stalk, and snapped it into a dozen pieces, ere he replied, in a grave voice:

"Amy and I understand each other thoroughly. She agrees with me that if the charm of our calm friendship with your family is broken now entire separation must ensue."

"And does she refuse me all hope?" cried Victor, in a tone of genuine anguish.

His companion sighed as he returned:

"I will not say that she does, and yet I dare not give you any encouragement. It may be that peace and joy may come for Amy, that she will find herself free to love and accept the generous, helping hand you offer her. Yet it is more likely not. However, it is not likely to be long before a decision can be formed. Until then I think we had best keep apart."

"No, I am not so selfish and exacting as that. I can wait while I have a ray of hope. You need not fear my troubling Amy—she shall not be made aware of my knowledge of this. You must come as usual. I am sure it will be better for us all."

"Noble, generous soul!" exclaimed Amyas Ayre, grasping his hand, and wringing it impetuously. "It cannot be but that happiness will come to one so deserving. I trust the time will arrive when we can explain to you everything, our whole life, even our marvellous, jealously guarded secret."

"I ask only for Amy's love; your secrets you may keep as long as you choose. Do not keep her away. I should be sorry to deny Annie the pleasure of her company. It pleases me to see them together."

"Your sister reminds me of some cherished lily, some saintly blossom nourished by purer dew and finer sunshine than common clay."

"Shall I hint to Annie this acquaintanceship of yours with our Cousin Barbara?" asked Victor, secretly determined that his sister should hear the pretty compliment he had paid her.

Amyas Ayre opened his fine eyes in astonishment, and answered, innocently:

"Why not, indeed?"

"Poor Annie!" sighed Victor, mentally. "He cannot love her, or he would give a different answer."

And then, with a sudden impulse he could scarcely explain to himself, he said aloud, in an earnest tone:

"Ayre, my dear fellow, I wish you and Annie may like each other as well as I hope the same for Amy and myself. That would complete my happiness."

It was a moment before the young artist comprehended his meaning.

When it came to him a hot flush swept across his cheek, and his lips trembled nervously, as he replied, with sudden vehemence:

"What do you mean, Victor Haldeman? It cannot be that Annie, the sweet, gentle, amiable Annie would stoop to think or care for me?"

"There might be stranger things, had. Remember, I have nothing to say for Annie herself, but I give you my best wishes for success. Faint heart, you know, never won fair lady."

"Good heavens! what direful toils are closing around me!" ejaculated Amyas Ayre, in a bitter tone. "I would rather fly away and hide myself in a desert than be the innocent cause of pain to Annie. No, no, it cannot be. I am needlessly alarmed."

He looked so distressed and annoyed that Victor could not refrain from saying, in a faintly reproachful tone:

"Would it be so terrible a thing for you to marry Annie? You do not care for her at all, then?"

"I admire, I respect, I love her with all my heart, and I would rather die than give her pain," returned Amyas Ayre, passionately.

"What can it be then which makes a barrier?" asked Victor, eagerly; "if it be your nameless fortune, your lack of means, some blight upon your birth, your kin, I assure you that need not make you despair. It is only you, your own character, that any one of us will question."

"So generous!" muttered the artist. "Oh, hard, hard fate! which will drive me away from this happy haven. For I see that I must go. I will not remain to bring grief to such generous friends."

"You still love Barbara?" queried Victor, in a puzzled voice.

Amyas Ayre's voice was replete with haughty scorn; his eye flashed proudly, as he repeated:

"Love Barbara Leighton! Heaven forgive me that the sentiment she inspires is so nearly allied to hate."

"Are you married to anyone else? Do you wish to marry any other lady, that you have no heart to give to Annie?"

"No, no. If I were free to marry any lady in the wide world, search it over I could find none who would inspire me with more earnest respect or with tenderer affection."

"And yet you say it is impossible for you to make her your wife?"

"Aye, as impossible as to pluck down yonder sun from his height."

And as he said this Amyas Ayre shivered, and turned his pale face from his friend's observation.

"It is beyond the Sphinx," muttered Victor, in a voice of thorough bewilderment.

"If it could only rest for a little while longer," murmured Amyas.

"And so it shall, my friend," said Victor, in a hearty tone. "Let us forget that this conversation has occurred. Whatever there may be about you which mystifies us, of one thing we are all certain, that we can trust to your honour and integrity. As you have said, we will be simply friends for a little while longer."

The artist gave his slender and delicate fingers to the other's clasp, as he replied:

"Thank you. I should indeed be thankful to have it remain so."

They walked on silently, and were turning the bend of the road which gave a view of the Haldeman mansion, when Victor made a sudden exclamation:

"By George! they have stolen a march upon us. If that be not Barbara Leighton I have forgotten the poise of her stately head. She was always a magnificent rider, and the gentleman beside her most likely is Mr. Granger. The others are the Daytons. They are coming on swiftly, and will stop to speak with me, of course. Do you care to meet her?"

He pointed as he spoke towards the little group of equestrians, cantering gaily along the cross-road, and looked deprecatingly into his companion's face.

He coloured deeply, and then paled, but his eye flashed, and the moustached lip curled proudly.

"I should not have courted the meeting, but I am not afraid to face it," answered he, hastily.

The merry riders came on, and, recognizing Victor, drew up their steeds with eager salutations. Barbara Leighton bent down from her superb black horse, her white plumes fluttering in the breeze, and extended a daintily gauntleted hand.

"You see we are here before our time. But we could not resist this charming day. Dear Annie and Rose are well, I trust, Cousin Victor. How you have improved since I saw you last."

"Thanks, fairest cousin. I believe I was a stammering, blushing boy then, so overwhelmed by your charms that I scarcely dared to speak a word. You perceive that time has taught me wisdom, for while I still admire I can command my tongue. I give you all a hearty welcome."

"Mr. Granger feared so large a party would be an intrusion, but I assured him he could not measure my kind aunt's hospitality. This is Mr. Arnold Granger, Cousin Victor."

Victor bowed and reached up to the extended hand, and the first glance into the grave, calm face won his good will. He turned then to the slender figure which, with the sketch-book under his arm, stood quietly beside him.

"And this is Mr. Ayre, Miss Leighton, Mr. Granger—a particular friend of the family, Barbara."

Miss Leighton bent down again, and her swift, questioning glance met the steady, unflinching hazel eyes turned towards her. The lady had the grace to colour faintly.

"I have had the honour of a previous acquaintance with Miss Leighton. I dare say she still remembers the quaint old town where she rusticated a couple of years since, even if she has forgotten me," replied Amyas Ayre, with a graceful bow.

"Ah, yes. I recognize you now. Two years have made great change. Do you sketch still?"

"To be sure. That boyish liking still clings to me when most others have dropped away."

"We shall look beneath those fascinating covers, I trust, if we remain here, and you are at hand," observed Arnold Granger, irresistibly impressed by the young artist's fine figure and peculiarly handsome face.

Amyas Ayre bowed, but made no other answer. He fell back a little, and after a few low words to his friend he turned and sauntered slowly away.

"A singularly prepossessing person," observed Arnold Granger, looking after him. "I don't know when I have seen a masculine face which comes so near to my ideas of what we may call perfect beauty."

"He's a fine fellow, full of genius, and as conscientious and tender-hearted as a woman," replied Victor, inwardly congratulating himself, as he glanced

at the splendid type of manly strength and power before him, that his still more beautiful sister was not present.

Barbara Leighton's cheek was still flushed.

"Whoever expected to find him here?" she murmured, and cast a second uneasy glance from the retreating figure to Arnold Granger's face.

But the latter had paid no attention whatever to her agitation. There was a dreamy, unconscious look on his face, which entirely ignored present circumstances. He shuddered, too, as though a chill breath touched him.

Victor Haldeman watched him attentively, while he talked carelessly with the Daytons, and thought: "He is not so desperately in love with Barbara, after all."

After a few more words the horses were allowed to proceed, and the picturesque group presently disappeared within the shade of the elm-guarded avenue.

The artist, from his covert behind a hedge, watched them canter through the gate. There was a mournful look in his deep, serious eyes, a bitter smile on his lip.

"Well it has come at last. The phantom which haunted me has taken a tangible shape, and I have met it bravely. I can rely now upon my own strength. I think my heart is numb, for I cannot tell if it bleeds or not. But, heaven be praised, the meeting I dreaded is over. Circumstances are slowly contracting around me, and there must be some change soon. Heaven only knows what the sequel will be."

And with downcast eyes and drooping head the youth took his way homeward.

(To be continued.)

VAN DUZER.

WHEN I, Fred Ford, was one-and-twenty I went to board with Mrs. French. When I first saw her she had wrinkles about her forehead, and a general expression which one who knew her might have interpreted into doubts about the extent of the baker's truthfulness, and of the new boarder's reliability.

But she had been very pretty—one of those women who flourish best under coarse luxury and petting, and wilt under misfortune like hothouse-flowers from neglect.

There was a miniature of a wax doll in the house, and an oil-painting of another wax doll, with puffs of light hair, and a low bodice, in the parlour; both had been perfect likenesses of Mrs. French when a young matron, if her statement were veracious.

Indeed, at forty-five she looked very like the same wax doll, subjected to hard usage, knocked and tossed about, with all her troubles marked upon her face, as though it had actually been wax instead of flesh.

The late Mr. French—that is, his portrait—hung in the opposite recess.

He had been very fond of his wife, and she of him; but that he had never been prosperous I gathered from the fact that on his death she had taken to keeping boarders, and that she was in the habit of saying, with a sigh, "That it was very imprudent for two poor people to marry."

The adage was not agreeable to me; but I was very fond of Mrs. French, she had been so kind to me.

When I first went there, almost a stranger, I had been very ill, and Mrs. French had nursed me and made me well again, and had put no "extras" in the bill, but had patted me on the head and said, "No, child. I'd like anyone else to do the same by Frank, if he were ill," when I spoke of recompense. And from that day I had tried to be what Frank was not to her.

Frank was exactly my age—a handsome young fellow, selfish as mortal could be, who used all his mother's surplus cash for kid gloves and cigars, and, with a good salary, was always in debt.

He was dissipated, too, and once I heard sobbing, stumbling and whispering in the passage, and imagined that Mrs. French and Fanny were piloting Master Frank to bed.

Fanny was only seventeen; not so pretty as her mother had been; but with a face which could never be so ploughed over by trouble and anxiety. She was born to bear it, and to bear it well. A cheerful, bright-faced girl, with a habit of conducting the household responsibilities as if they were her own.

She could appease indignant and long-suffering butchers; she could make desserts out of nothing; she could accept the rôle of chambermaid or laundress in case of emergency; and knew how to fascinate the gourmand at table, when the meat was tough, so that he could not have told whether he were eating fish, flesh, or fowl. She was the lifeboat of

the establishment, and saved it from destruction a dozen times a week.

I began by thinking her a nice girl, and ended by falling in love with her.

I was junior clerk at Messrs. Brine and Puffer's, with a promise of promotion. I had barely enough to live on—Mrs. French knew exactly how much. I had heard her say so many times that "poor people should never marry" that I felt afraid she meant something personal.

Once, on the receipt of wedding-cards, she remarked that "It cost something to start in life," and groaned.

I humbly asked for an explanation and had revealed unto me a dim vision of kitchen furniture and mattresses, blankets, parlour chairs, carpets and china.

After that I used casually to ask the prices of mahogany and ironmongery of the dealers. I kept a strict account of such matters, and at last reckoned it all up. Being able, by a system of strict economy, to save two shillings a week, I found that, with my salary, it would take forty years and two months to provide materials for housekeeping. I should then be sixty-one years old. This was not encouraging.

I heard that "things were going up," with a horror equal to that manifested by Mrs. French herself, and felt wrinkles coming in my forehead, if I could not see them there.

I knew I was too poor to think of marrying anyone, but I longed to woo, win and wed dear little Fanny French.

I used to wish that I was a hod-carrier; then I might have built a cot, bought two chairs and a clay furnace, lived on herrings and potatoes, and been happy with the other half of my soul. But a lady and gentleman cannot be happy without, at least, two hundred pounds' worth of furniture to begin with.

I looked love at Fanny, and acted it to the best of my ability, but I said nothing. Anything was better than a decided "No;" and I had a conscience too. I was not sure that I had a right to try to gain a "Yes" under the circumstances.

Yet Fanny seemed to like me, and I should have been tolerably happy if it had not been for Mr. Van Duzer. He was "Van Duzer & Co."—"Co." being a freak of imagination—and Frank French was in his employ. I knew he had only taken the brother because he liked Fanny, and I knew that he liked her so much that he wanted her altogether for himself. He was a very rich man, and still making money, but he was fifty years old, with a strongly marked Jewish face and a lumbering gait, with no more music in his soul than there was in his voice, which grated like a file, and he had been married twice already. Fanny did not like him, but Mrs. French approved of his suit. Once I heard her talking to Fanny about him.

"You'd never know a trouble if you married Mr. Van Duzer, child," she said. "All the pinching and worrying would be over for you."

"And a new trouble might come," said Fanny, in a dreamy way. "I don't love him, mamma."

"Love-matches don't always turn out the best," said Mrs. French, with a little sigh.

Fanny stopped the conversation with a merry declaration that she "never meant to marry at all," and I heard no more; but those few words troubled me; and now that Mr. Van Duzer came to the house every Sunday as well as every Wednesday, and brought bouquets with him, wore fashionable cravats, and evinced a disposition to linger with Fanny at the window on moonlight nights, uttered uncalled-for fibs about his age, spoke of his compeers as "old folks," and conducted himself with a youthful levity which was utterly ridiculous, I found it impossible to restrain my feelings much longer.

One day I caught Fanny in the parlour—there was no one else near—and I put my arm about her waist.

"Fanny dear," I said, "you know how poor I am. Won't you give me a little hope that it would be worth my while to make my fortune?"

"What do you mean, Fred?" she asked—but she blushed.

"That you would share it with me," I said.

She tried to laugh.

"I love you so much, Fanny," I said. "Don't you like me a little better, at least, than old Van Duzer?"

She laughed in earnest this time.

"That would be very easy, Fred," she said.

"Then you won't marry him?"

She looked at me a moment, seemed to reflect—and then, with a bright, honest, earnest look, put her hand in mine.

"No, Fred," she said, "I never will."

I was very happy then, and I raised the little hand to my lips, and kissed it.

"And some day, Fanny, you will marry me?" I asked. "Only let me hope that, and then I can fight a good fight with the world, I think."

Again she seemed to ponder. Then she looked up very thoughtfully.

"Some day, Fred," she said, "when it is right for both of us—if you still wish it."

Then I kissed her lips and we were both silent for a time; and I took my mother's wedding-ring from my little finger, and put it upon one of hers. And I shall never forget that moment, if I live to forget everything else on earth.

We did not tell Mrs. French. It was our secret, for a little while, at least.

I was not afraid of old Van Duzer now, let him come when he would. I laughed at him in secret. I exulted in his downfall.

Some day he would be refused—he who had called me "that young fellow," with a sneer, and had "wondered what I wanted there," as I lingered near the window when he stood with Fanny. When Frank told me how light "old Van Duzer" made his duties, "because he was fond of Fanny," and said "it would be a good thing for her and for him," I could afford to smile.

I felt sure of her, and I was happy.

So happy that when, one evening, the old merchant came in, with a face full of solemn portent, and invited Fanny to take a walk, I felt no concern whatever.

Even if he intended to propose it was all the better for me.

I should be rid of him. I knew what Fanny's answer must be, for she wore my engagement-ring. I saw her leave the house leaning upon his arm, and smiled with a sort of pity for poor Van Duzer. And I sat upon the balcony, watching for their return.

It was nearly ten o'clock before they came. Then I saw them—she walking with her head resting upon her bosom; he, with a triumphant strut. And, at the threshold—the street-lamp betrayed them—he kissed her as they parted! What did it all mean?

I soon had my answer.

She came into the parlour, and sat down upon a sofa. No one else was there. I went to her. She was sobbing.

"Fanny, oh, Fanny!" I cried, and she put her head upon my shoulder.

Since my engagement it had often rested there.

"Kiss me once more, Fred," she said. "It's the last time. Oh, Fred, Fred—poor, dear Fred, the last time. I'm going to marry Mr. Van Duzer;" and she took the ring from her finger and laid it in my hand.

"Are you mad, or am I?" I asked.

"I shall be soon," she said. "Try to be happy, Fred. Try to forget me as I must you."

"You have sold yourself for money," I said.

"You! oh, Fanny, it is horrible! I can't believe it!"

And then she tore herself from my grasp and ran out of the room.

By the next evening, somehow, everyone knew that Fanny French was to marry Mr. Van Duzer.

People spoke of it as an excellent match.

But, pleased as Mrs. French seemed to be, there was an undercurrent of trouble in her face; Frank was not at home, and was said to have gone on a journey. I fancied the young fellow had managed to get into some scrape or other, though my own trouble was so great that I hardly cared for anything else. As for Fanny, she kept herself out of sight, except at meal times, and then was so sad and pale that I should scarcely have known her.

I ought to have gone away, but I was in a bewildered state, and it was easier to stay than to think about going. I felt ill too, and had a vague fancy that I should die soon. To live with no hope of Fanny seemed impossible. How small and easily overcome those anxieties about ways and means seemed to me now. I felt them very great while I thought myself sure of Fanny; they were sheer absurdities now she was lost. I fell into a moody, brooding way, passed sleepless nights, could not eat, could not rest—at last, and my excuse is that I was nearly mad—I made up my mind to take my life in my own hands, and not live an hour after she was Mrs. Van Duzer.

It was, or so it seemed to me, a very nice piece of poetical justice that she should suffer, and I resolved to stand in her path as she came out of church and shoot myself then and there. If she died in consequence it was a well-deserved fate; and if she did not I intended to haunt her, scarcely reflecting what condition of spirit I must find myself in to remain revengeful.

One day I went into the parlour suddenly and found all the women of the house grouped about a pile of white silk and blonde. I knew it was a wedding-dress and veil, and what I suffered no mortal ever knew. But I lived through it.

It strengthened my suicidal resolve, however, and, wicked as I was, I deserved some pity, my agony was so intense.

And each event of that woeful fortnight, for the wedding was to take place immediately, was a fresh blow to me.

The new furniture for the wedding, the coming of the wedding-wards, and at the last the cake, the box of white gloves, and the wreath, which were exhibited on private view to the lady boarders. It was all very bitter to bear, and I was truly in earnest.

And so the days slipped round and brought the wedding morning, and I sat in the parlour alone.

They were to be married in church, and she was, I knew, being dressed for the ceremony. I had not seen her for three days, and now they told me she was looking very ill.

I had loaded the little pistol and kept it in my bosom. I felt that the end of all things was near for me. It was ten. She was to be married at eleven.

At that moment the door bell rang, and a gentleman was ushered in—a young man with a dissipated look about him, but earnest and sober then, as some sudden shock often makes such men. He stood, hat in hand, before me, and I saw in his face that he was the bearer of evil tidings.

I arose to meet him.

"You asked for Mrs. French?" I said.

"I did," said the young man. "Are you a friend of the family?"

I bowed.

"For heaven's sake tell me what to do," he said. "There was no one else to come, and I came. It's a horrible thing. Frank French is dead. Shot in a gambling-place. He's been hiding, you know, for a month, in consequence of some scrape, I fancy. But he turned up at that place last night, and played with G—, and won his money, and G— shot him. It's his sister's wedding-day, isn't it? It's a horrible thing to have to do this, this telling them. Oh, good heavens, there's his mother!"

And I turned round only in time to catch Mrs. French in my arms. She had heard something and understood all.

They buried poor Frank, and of course there was no wedding in the house. The wedding-dresses and the feast were hurried out of sight, and in the presence of that bereaved mother I forgot my own sorrow in her greater woe. On my arm she leaned beside the grave, and there my mad thoughts of self-destruction and revenge left me for ever; I prayed for forgiveness, and for comfort and happiness for Fanny French, whoever she might wed—wherever she might dwell.

In the twilight I sat near the window, looking out into the street, and watching the homeward-going crowd, when a hand touched my shoulder, and, turning, I saw Fanny French in her deep mourning. Her face was tear-stained, yet she was more like the old Fanny than I had seen her for some weeks.

"I must tell you something, Fred," she said. "You remember the night—the night I walked out with Mr. Van Duzer?"

"Remember it?" I answered, with a glance.

"You have thought very badly of me ever since," she said, "and I have been very wretched. Oh, Fred, I'm not even sure that I did right; but I sacrificed myself, my own happiness. I thought it would have been my life also, for poor Frank and my dear mother. Frank had robbed Mr. Van Duzer—he is dead now remember; try not to feel harshly to him—and Mr. Van Duzer told me so that night."

"I know where he is," he said. "I can arrest him for larceny to-morrow; but I will not harm or disgrace him if you will be my wife. If you refuse me, I shall do my worst."

"Oh, Fred, how I pleaded with that man. He had a heart of stone. I told him I could not love him. I told him all the truth."

"I've had my way in most things," he said; "I mean to have it in this. Remember, you ruin your brother, and perhaps kill your mother, if you are obstinate, for she loves him better than she does you."

"And I knew he spoke the truth; and I loved them both, so I promised to be his wife. Oh! Fred, Fred!"

I took her little hand in mine; it was as cold as ice.

"Fanny," I said, "now—how is it now?"

"Mr. Van Duzer's power is gone. He cannot harm dead Frank, or my mother through him," she sobbed.

"Oh, Fred, since dear papa died I have felt as though I must always bear the shock of every blow, and it seemed my duty."

I put her hand to my lips, and drew her towards me.

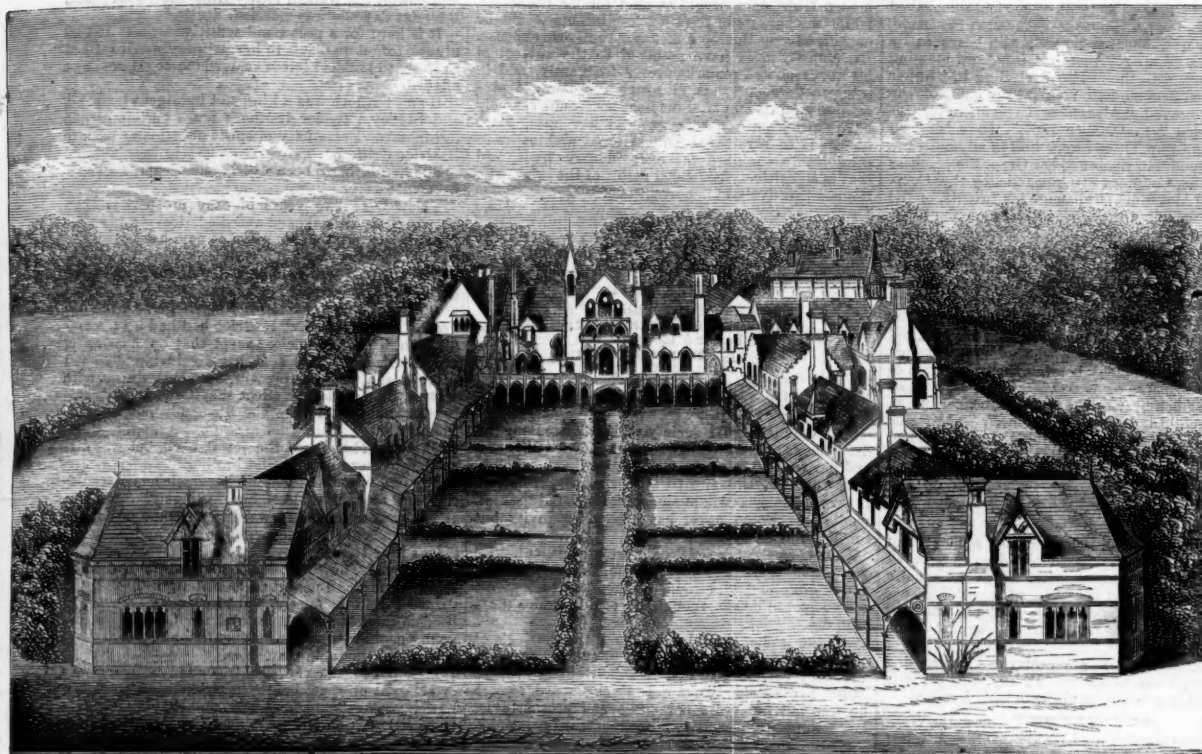
"Fanny," I said, "will you wear the ring again?"

And I took the one she had returned to me and laid it on her palm. "Will you let me hope that if fortune smiles upon me you will be my wife?"

"Whether fortune smiles or frowns, Fred," she said, and put it on and kissed it.

And she has kept her word, and we are one.

M. K. D.



[THE ALEXANDRA ORPHANAGE, HORNSEY RISE.]

THE ALEXANDRA ORPHANAGE FOR INFANTS.

ENGLAND has long been celebrated for her charities, and, notwithstanding the grumbling assertions of certain discontented people, there can be no doubt that the poor are better provided for in this country than in any other. Asylums and hospitals are numerous in every part of our island. There has been, however, one class of human beings whose wants have perhaps been more or less overlooked in London; at any rate, a sufficient means of taking care of our orphan population has hitherto been wanting. But in a short time this will no longer be the case: a building is now in course of construction which will prove one of the greatest blessings yet founded in this great metropolis.

The Alexandra Orphanage, the first stone of which was laid on Saturday, the 6th of July, 1867, will be one of the noblest monuments to that good Princess whose name it bears, and hundreds will, through its means, live to bless the royal patroness who otherwise might have died at an early age.

The new building at Hornsey Rise is to be arranged upon an entirely novel plan, which promises to be a most perfect one. The area occupied is about 500 ft. by 300 ft., upon the side of the hill, and is situated in one of the most healthy parts of London. The ground is to be arranged in separate detached cottage blocks, in the form of a double quadrangle. The cottages are to be placed in couples, each distinct, and possessing a garden or play-ground, and containing a day-room, two dormitories, with nurses' rooms, lavatories, and bath-rooms.

Provision is to be made for the reception of 400 infants. The quadrangle provides to each block a separate recreation ground, and access to a covered corridor communicating with the school-rooms and the dining-hall. The central buildings comprise the principal centre of dining-hall, matron's house, and domestic office on a terrace level with the cloister, communicating immediately with the cottage corridors. The schools on the east are approached in the same way.

The infirmary is placed on the extreme boundary of the freehold property, and is to be erected on the novel principle of adopting a Swiss-cottage exterior and plan to the requirements of the institute; this building will have a veranda carried up to the eaves of the roof, and giving to three floors access by separate staircases to three wards, so that in all contagious and epidemic diseases the separation may be

perfect and consistent with the requirements of such an institution.

Thus it will be seen that every endeavour has been made to render the new establishment perfect, both as regards the requirements of health and comfort. The entire project reflects the highest credit, not only upon its originators, but upon the architect, Mr. Alfred Robert Pite, F.R.S., B.A., and if carried out, as we doubt not it must, will prove one of the most perfect charitable institutions in this country.

The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone, which, in consequence of the unfortunate illness of H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, was performed by her grace the Duchess of Sutherland, was most interesting, and a large number of persons were present to witness it—among others there were the Earl and Countess of Granville, the Duchess San Alpino, Lady Florence, Sir Roland Gower, M.P., and Lord and Lady Vane.

A guard of honour, consisting of the children, varying from two years and upwards, was stationed at the entrance of the tent to receive her grace, while the band of the Caledonian School played an appropriate air of welcome. The healthful, well-cared-for appearance of these little ones aroused the warmest interest of the lady visitors, and as her grace passed into the marquee she smiled upon them with an affection that called forth the admiration of all the bystanders. The lady who had charge of the children handed the Duchess and her lady friends a bouquet, after accepting which they were conducted to chairs placed on the dais. Having taken their seats, the proceedings were opened by the Rev. Daniel Wilson, M.A., vicar of Islington, who read appropriate portions of the Scriptures. The Rev. John Cumming, D.D., then offered up a prayer, which was followed by a hymn, sung by the entire assembly.

The preliminaries over, Mr. Soul, the Hon. Secretary, read an address to her grace, explaining that this charity was founded in October, 1864, under the patronage of her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, who not only gives it its distinguished name, but was one of its first annual subscribers. It originated in the thoughtfulness of a few friends, deeply and for a long period interested in the welfare of the orphan poor. It was seen, in carrying out the benevolent designs of the orphan working school, that there was great need of a charity for the infant orphans of respectable but poor persons, whose incomes were altogether insufficient to permit of their making future provision for their families; and this consideration determined those who first met in con-

ference to convene a meeting which resulted in the formation of a committee, half of whom should be members of the parent society. In the short space of two years and a half 90 infant orphans were presented for admission, and 69 elected. The sum of 4,788l. 8s. 4d. has been received on the ordinary account, out of which 2,800l. have been paid towards the purchase of the freehold land upon which the buildings are to be erected. In addition to the above contributions amounting to 4,218l. have been received or promised on account of the building fund. It is by the munificence of the earliest friend of the charity that the two houses occupied at the present time are permitted to be free of rent. The same kind friend contributes 50 guineas annually in aid of the funds. And all the services rendered, except by those of the household, are entirely gratuitous.

Her grace replied that it was with mingled feelings of embarrassment and pride, at the request of the committee, and with the sanction of her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, that she took her place in laying the first stone of the building which is to bear her name. "In adverting to the sad cause by which this ceremony is deprived of so much of its brilliancy and charm," she continued, "I believe I express not only my own feelings but those of every woman here when I say that the devoted attachment and admiration felt for the Princess of Wales from the day when her royal highness first touched the shores of England have been increased in us tenfold by the courage and cheerful brightness with which she has borne the long and painful illness from which, by the blessing of God, she is now so nearly recovered. This good work, the national end and objects of which we have just heard described, must deeply interest every heart that has itself known or given to others a parent's care. May the Alexandra Orphanage prosper as it deserves."

The actual laying of the stone now took place. It was situated in the centre of a raised platform, neatly decorated with a profusion of flags, and bore the following inscription:

The Alexandra Orphanage for Infants,

Founded October 28, 1864.

This stone was laid July 6, 1867,

By Her Grace

The Duchess of Sutherland, Countess of Cromartie.

Alfred Robert Pite, F.R.S., B.A., Hon. Architect.

Frederick Barlow, Treasurer.

Joseph Soul, Hon. Secretary.

The trowel was presented to her grace, and she duly laid the stone. It is a most beautiful work of the silversmith's art, closely akin to the one which was presented to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales,

also the production of the same firm, on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the Home for Little Boys, at Horton Kirby, Kent, on the 7th July last year. It is of silver, parcel gilt, very richly engraved and decorated with precious stones. The blade, which is heart-shaped, and partly gilt, bears at its widest part a group representing Our Lord blessing little children, with the motto encircling it, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" at the point of the blade is engraved, "Alexandra Orphanage for Infants, founded 27th October 1864," while between this and the group is the inscription in silver letters on a gilt ground "Presented to her Grace the Duchess of Sutherland, Countess of Cromartie, by the Committee of the Alexandra Orphanage for Infants, on the occasion of her laying the foundation-stone of the new buildings at Hornsey Rise, on Saturday, July 6, 1867." The handle is of jasper, bearing the monogram of her grace in gold and enamel, surmounted by the ducal crown set with rubies and emeralds, and supported by the Prince of Wales's coronet and plumes. At the junction of the handle with the blade are two semi-recumbent figures in oxidized silver of a little boy and girl, who support between them an enamelled shield bearing the monogram of H.R.H. the Princess of Wales. Beneath them is an enamelled ribbon bearing the motto of the institution, "Take this child and nurse him for me." The reverse of the blade consists of a large medallion in oxidized silver, on which is engraved a view of the new buildings, while on either side are the names of Alfred Robert Pite, F.R.S., B.A., hon. architect, and Fred. Barlow, treasurer; Joseph Soul, hon. secretary.

At the conclusion of the ceremony a number of ladies and elegantly dressed children presented purses in aid of the charity; after which the equally interesting ceremony of presenting the children sustained by the benevolence of the public in the asylum to her grace was gone through amidst much applause.

From first to last it was a pretty and interesting sight, although one which we can say with pride is by no means uncommon in philanthropic London.

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF MAXIMILIAN.—A letter from Mexico gives the detail of the charges on which the late Emperor Maximilian was tried and condemned by a court-martial. The charges were—1, Usurpation of the supreme authority; 2, Promulgation of a decree dated October 8, 1865, ordering the execution, within 24 hours after their arrest, of Liberals taken with arms in their hands, and the execution in virtue of the decree of Generals Ortega and Salazar, and of numerous other officers; 3, Promulgation of the decree of the 7th March, 1867, for the continuation of the civil war after the departure of the French; 4, Promulgation of a decree at Mexico establishing a regency for maintaining the usurpation of the supreme power, and for continuing the civil war, though all hopes of success were lost.

ADULTERATION OF MILK.—The adulteration of milk is one of the worst frauds that can be committed in supplying food for public consumption. True, it does not actually administer poison; but it strikes at the root of a nation's health by enfeebling the young, pinching the underfed, and stinting the sustenance allowed to the sick and aged. It is like committing murder by pin-pricks. Where aliment is measured out to each mouth, as in innumerable public and private establishments, the daily subtraction of even a small proportion becomes at length a serious evil. It is starvation administered in small doses. A rich man's child, living at home, may care little about the quality of his milk; but to workmen's children, and even to schoolboys and school-girls, it becomes a matter of vital importance. For, to mention nothing else, the abstraction of cream, by diminishing one source of animal heat, if long continued with children mainly fed on milk, causes them to flag, pine away, and die.

FRANCE AND TURKEY.—When the Sultan first landed in France, at Toulon, and commenced his railway journey thence to Paris, it was said he was very much struck with the appearance of the peasants, labourers, and artisans lining the smaller stations traversed by the Imperial train. "Why," he said to an exalted personage nearly attached to his person, "these people have all got strong clean shoes, good caps and blouses, and trousers without holes in them. Why are not my people dressed like these? Why am I obliged to see rags and dirt in Turkey, instead of whole clothes and cleanliness as here? Be sure that this shall be altered as soon as I return." His Imperial Majesty has not forgotten his word, for as soon as he had signified to the great officials that it was his intention to proceed from Rustchuk to Stamboul by land, through Bulgaria, the mayors of the different villages through which he would pass were advised by mounted expresses

that they would have to provide well-clothed children in abundance, of both creeds, for the Sultan's inspection, and that the new costumes of the Mohammedan little ones would be paid for by the State, while the parents of the Christian infants would be expected to rig them out afresh at their own expense. His Majesty must have resorted to the subject of his above-quoted remarks pretty frequently, and in somewhat strong terms, else such a measure of precaution against Imperial displeasure would scarcely have been deemed necessary. At any rate, some hundreds of barefooted and tattered urchins were comfortably equipped for once in their lives, and that is a positively beneficial result of the great trip, if a comparatively unimportant one.

THE WEB OF FATE.

CHAPTER III.

Tibbie Fowler o' the glen,
There's o'er many wooln' at her;
Tibbie Fowler o' the glen,
There's o'er many wooln' at her;
Wooln' at her, peerin' at her,
Courtin' at her, canna get her.
Fithy eil, it's for her pelf,
That a' the lads ar' wooln' at her.

AMONG the higher society which Miss Langdon drew about her by her sweetness, her intelligence, and her wealth, came the Griffith brothers. Sidney was the star, the superb and brilliant gentleman, the romantic hero whom she scarcely dared look at, whom she would never have dared to invite but for his brother.

Henry was not so clever, nor so brilliant. He was three years younger, was an embryo banker, and might one day be rich; neither painted, wrote, nor composed music, though he could admire those who did.

At the same time he had a little the look of Sidney, and was devoted to his brother heart and soul. Sidney patronized and petted their young hostess, called her "child" when nobody else heard, though he was but ten years her elder, and presently let fall a word which fell like seed in fruitful ground.

"All I need is a little sister like you," he said. "I have none, and since I am never going to get married I need one."

Oh, the plaintive, flute-like voice. The warm, soft light in the clear eyes. The flowing mist of bright hair, and the swaying grace of the proud form. What lot could be loftier or sweeter than to be a sister to this man?

What thought so proud, so thrilling, as that he needed her?

Mr. Langdon set himself thoroughly against the Griffiths.

He didn't like the family, they were cold and haughty. He didn't like their circumstances. Henry might become rich if his brother didn't suck him as dry as an orange, for Sidney was known to be in debt, at the same time that he lived like a prince. All the income he inherited went to pay for a suite of rooms, when one room in a comfortable house would have been good enough. True, his drawings, songs, and magazine articles sold for twice their weight in gold; but what was that to a man who bought old china, and prided himself on the possession of pictures, books, and marbles that nobody else could get? Had he not seen him, with his own eyes, pay fifty pounds for a china plate with some green rushes and a frog painted on it?

He had better pay his debts.

No, he would have no alliance with the Griffiths. All they wanted was his money, and that they should never get.

The upshot of the matter was that when Beatrice was twenty-one years of age, and before she had been three years away from school she became Mrs. Henry Griffith, and the doors of her uncle's house and heart were shut upon her.

But before this crisis there had been irritating things said.

Having exhausted all arguments and entreaties, having abused the Griffiths to their faces, and behind their backs, having vowed and threatened till he was out of breath, Mr. Langdon said what he had better not have said:

"You don't care for this fellow you are pretending to marry," he said. "You are in love with Sidney Griffith, and only marry his brother to please him."

It was a strange face that confronted him as he spoke these words—a face so pale and still that Mr. Langdon felt himself silenced, and could not say another word.

The brown eyes looked at him with a steady, bright gaze, that was stern as well as bright, and he felt, surely, that whoever Beatrice might love, from that moment she loved not him.

That outrage had wiped from her memory every trace of his past kindness and generosity.

She said not a word, but after that look, that made him cower, she walked loftily from the room. And the next day she was married.

It is hard for a proud and sensitive woman to forgive or forget an insult to her delicacy, and it seemed as if that blow had left a scar which could never be effaced.

Henry Griffith was a kind and indulgent husband, and Sidney a tender brother; but a certain girlish lightness and elasticity of spirit never came back to Beatrice Griffith.

She had hitherto been a girl; she became a woman from that day.

There were two years of easy prosperity, then Henry Griffith sickened and died, leaving his wife a scanty annuity, which perhaps paid her board and bought her gloves.

His business was in his brother's hands, whom he desired to take care of his wife.

During the two years of her marriage and the one year of her widowhood Beatrice had had no communication with her uncle, except that on hearing of her marriage he had sent her a valuable diamond bracelet as a wedding present, accompanying it with a sarcastic note to the effect that if she should come to want she could take the diamonds out and sell them.

She would have sent the jewel back, but was dissuaded by her husband and brother.

She had not told them of her uncle's last accusation, and said but little of her feelings towards him, and they both looked forward to the time when Mr. Langdon should be reconciled to her, and reinstate her as his heiress.

Meanwhile, however, Mr. Langdon had hunted up relations far and near, had looked at, criticized, and turned them off; finally, had hired a housekeeper to become the head of his establishment, and adopted a young nephew to mould to his mind and see if boys were more tractable than girls.

It will be seen that Beatrice had no very easy or pleasant prospect before her in seeking a reconciliation with this uncle of hers, and that Mr. Griffith had need of some influence over her in order to persuade her to a trial.

It seemed that Mr. Griffith was not to finish his article without further interruption, for scarcely had he settled himself to his writing again before the door opened, and in walked a heavy, dark-bearded man, who did not burden himself with the ceremony of knocking.

A coarse, determined, matter-of-fact person, one could see at once, and a striking contrast to the gentleman he confronted.

"I beg your pardon," Mr. Griffith said, rising with gentle courtesy, though a spot of deep red had burned into his cheeks at sight of his visitor, "I did not hear you knock."

"I did not knock," said the man, roughly, without removing his hat. "I had business with you, and walked in without waiting for permission."

"Will you sit down?" said Mr. Griffith, pointing to a chair.

The man looked contemptuously.

"It will not take long to say what I've got to say," he replied; "I want that bill paid."

"I am sorry that I have not the money now," was the gentle answer, "but the white fingers grasped the pen-holder so that it snapped. I have not had time to get it since you asked me before."

"It's a fortnight since I asked you," was the angry retort; "and in that time you could have raised it. Erlich failed through such creditors as you are, sir. But I'm not Erlich. He told me his bills weren't worth ten shillings in the pound, but I told him I'd get twenty, and I will. Those curtains have been up a year and two months, and now I want the money for them. You must get me sixty pounds."

"Had the bills remained in Mr. Erlich's hands, he would have been paid before this," Mr. Griffith said, quietly. "He would have refrained from troubling me, knowing that in order to earn money I must keep my mind free from annoyance. The very anxiety I have felt to pay you has prevented my doing so. I was at this moment writing an article which your visit, and the impatience you display, will prevent my finishing. I have no money."

"You have no money to pay your debts!" cried the creditor, angrily; "but you can buy pictures and furniture fit only for a millionaire. You can buy Sevres vases. I know the cost of those things on your mantel-piece, sir! You can have pearl paper-knives inlaid with gold! I wonder now what such a one as this costs?" taking one up from the table. "You can bathe in rose-water, and sleep in white kid gloves to keep your hands white! You see I know your ways. But you can't pay your honest debts. But I'll have it, sir, if I have to put you in jail."

I'll put your fine trinkets under the auctioneer's hammer."

It is possible that Mr. Griffith might have forgiven anything but this last threat and the almost blasphemous epithet applied to his possessions.

He shuddered with horror and disgust at the sound. "Leave my room, sir, and you shall have the money to-morrow," he said, turning a pale and angry face on his creditor.

"How can I be sure?" asked the man, roughly. "You'll have to take my word for it," was the haughty answer; and Mr. Griffith turned his back and gave the bell a violent ring.

John was at the door before his master's hand had left the tassel.

"Show this person out!" commanded Mr. Griffith, in a voice whose sharpness was new to his creditor, and indeed which few had heard before.

The irate visitor hesitated a moment, but the glare of those wide, flashing eyes, and the gesture of the long white finger pointing to the door, cowed him, and he went out wiser, if not richer, than when he entered.

When Mr. Griffith was alone he began walking slowly up and down the room.

The step might seem gentle at first glance, but look again and you see far more intensity in that gentleman's tread than in the most rapid walk. You felt every time the foot was set down as though it crushed something.

The gentleman's hands were clasped behind his back, and his head drooped slightly. Slowly the fierce glow faded out of his face, and a deadly paleness took its place.

For a haughty and refined man that interview had been rather trying. As he went over it his brows contracted gloomily, and the eyes beneath them moved restlessly and showed a changeable sparkle. Looking closely, you might fancy them not unlike the eyes of a cat when she hears a mouse in the wall, or sees a rabbit or a bird in her path.

Presently he went to the mantel-piece, and took in his hand a pile of letters which John had left there.

"Oh, of course, of course," he muttered, bitterly, as one after another rustled between his white fingers.

One after another was glanced over and tossed into the grate. Then came a pretty note from Miss Luter, the postess, thanking him for a favourable criticism.

"Your notice put me in such tune that I have been singing ever since," she wrote; "or, rather, I was but the *Zolian* harp, over which your praise wafted drowsy music forth."

Then came a letter of four pages from a young man who had written a book which was to astonish the world, and which he desired Mr. Griffith to get some publisher to take. In return he would send him a presentation copy.

These last epistles the gentleman tossed carelessly on the table, and resumed his walk.

A deep red was now burning all over his face, and his quicker step showed more nervous irritation, if less concentrated rage.

"I suppose the fools think that they must have their money," he muttered; "but where it's to come from is more than I can tell. Why I was not born to a fortune I can't tell. I ought to be rich."

He glanced around the lofty and elegant apartments.

"I know how to spend money, and no one can say that I squander it in coarse dissipation. No, it all goes to gratify a refined taste. These things are as necessary to me, as his pipe is to a labourer, and I will have them. I had better be dead than live in sordid circumstances."

He glanced around again with a bitter smile.

"Jameson wants to know if I couldn't sell something to pay him. Perhaps he would like me to send that divine *Giotti* to auction, the only *Giotti* on the continent; or, perhaps, he would prefer that missal, written and painted in a monastery before the time of Luther, curse him!"

Literally the *offree* belonged to Luther, but in his heart Mr. Griffith was cursing his creditor.

It was little this gentleman cared for any religion, except the Pagan one of beauty.

"May I come in?" asked a sweet voice.

And there was Beatrice Griffith, fresh from her drive, smiling, and as bright as a star. She seemed to be better, or some feelings were working strongly in her heart, for there was a rich glow in her face.

"You are welcome," he said, without stirring towards her, only looking at her. "Come in, *Wild-rose*."

She did credit to the name he gave her then.

"We have had a delightful drive," she said, coming in and closing the door after her. "The horses ran away, and we were nearly thrown over an embankment. It quite roused me up."

"My dear Beatrice, what an escape."

"From drowsiness, yes. Such a little adventure

clears one's ideas. It showed me the excellence of the proposal you made this morning. All that remains is to study ways and means. I fancy that my uncle's housekeeper is a dragon whose head it will be necessary to cut off before I approach him. However, I'll set my wits to work. Good-bye. I only came in to say this."

"Stay a moment, and let me tell you how glad I am that you have so decided. If you choose to try, I have no fear of the dragon."

"Oh, well, we shall see," she answered, still retreating.

"I had a favour to ask, which I forgot this morning," he said. "But you are in such haste."

"Never in too much haste to listen while you ask a favour," she replied, smiling brightly. "You so seldom ask, and even when you do, it always turns out that the favour is for me."

"Not this time, Beatrice. I want you to allow Lascelles to copy the setting of your diamond bracelet. It is a very beautiful pattern, and he will make but one, and that one also a diamond. Are you willing?"

"Surely. You want the bracelet to take to him?"

"Yes, dear, if you will let me take it to-night. I was speaking to him about it yesterday."

"I will get it at once," she said, cordially, and, tripping away, soon returned with her uncle's wedding-gift.

"I will be very careful of it," he said, putting it into his breast-pocket. "What time will you dine?"

"Mrs. Washburn has a friend to dine with her at seven, and wants us to wait. It is half-past five now; I must run and dress."

"I will go to see Lascelles, and be back in time," Mr. Griffith said, looking after her as she went up the broad staircase, smiling back on him as she went.

Half an hour afterwards Mr. Griffith was closeted with Mr. Lascelles, the jeweller.

"I hate to do it, Lascelles," he said; "and if I were not obliged, nothing would tempt me. But I cannot help it. Beatrice needs the money, and if I had it to give to her she wouldn't take it from me. Can you substitute paste so that the difference will not be detected?"

"Nobody will ever suspect that they are not the real stones," the jeweller said, critically examining the gems. "It does seem a pity to break these up, but I shall set them in a different pattern so as to make more show. This is rather crowded. I could take a ring, ear-rings, and pin out of it. What did you say the bracelet cost?"

"It was five hundred pounds."

"Um—um!" muttered the jeweller, thoughtfully. "Two of the large stones are very good, but this one has a flaw, and the largest is imperfect."

Mr. Griffith sat silent, with sparkling eyes and a very pale face.

"I couldn't say more than two hundred pounds," said the jeweller, after a pause.

"Tut!" exclaimed the other, impatiently. "You know that the very smallest of those fifty diamonds would set in a ring for thirty pounds."

"Perhaps," was the moderate answer. "But remember that the setting must cost something. Then those four large ones are off colour. Besides, I must allow myself some profit. But I will say three hundred pounds; I think that ought to satisfy you. You know that fine paste is valuable. I shall be giving you the cost of the bracelet."

"Very well, I agree," Mr. Griffith said, slowly. "And I must repeat my request that the affair may be kept secret."

"Oh, never fear!" said the jeweller, with some dignity. "I did not need such a request in the first instance. I often have such delicate affairs on hand. You are not the only person who exchanges diamonds for paste. Believe me, sir, a jeweller holds almost as many family secrets as a physician. Shall I write you a cheque?"

"I would prefer notes."

"I haven't so much with me. I can give you two hundred now, and the rest after the bank opens in the morning."

"That will do."

Exactly as Mrs. Washburn was taking out her watch for the third time, and fretting about Mr. Griffith's dilatory movements, he entered the parlour. She began complaining at once.

"Whoever heard of a man having to transact business after sunset? You know that there was no more need for your going out than there is of my flying. It is ten minutes past dinner time, and I am positive it is spoiled. This is Miss Margaret Willis, whom you don't deserve to know. Maggie, did you ever hear of Mr. Griffith?"

"Dear me!" said a sprightly little lady, extending a slender hand overloaded with jewels; "I have heard of little else since I came to town. I am glad to see you, sir; for if I had heard of you much more

without seeing you, I should have hated you. And it is disagreeable hating people."

"What then must it be to be hated?" says Mr. Griffith.

"Come, come!" interposed Mrs. Washburn, "we will talk in the dining-room. You young people can go by yourselves. I need help."

"Now, Sidney Griffith, I want you to give me credit for being your friend," she said, when Beatrice and Miss Willis had passed on. "I've brought that girl here for you to marry. She is rich enough to gratify all your extravagant notions, you Sybarite, and good natured enough not to scold or twit you about the money. She will be delighted to marry such a celebrity, and you can't do better."

"I would marry her with the utmost pleasure if she would consent to let me have a house by myself, and never come near me unless by invitation," he said. "But she is too sprightly. I dislike a woman on steel springs, and with such a ringing voice!"

"Oh, fie!" cried the lady, impatiently. "Fancy that the ring in her voice is a ring of gold."

When they were seated at table Mr. Griffith looked at his sister-in-law, and, looking once, he looked again. He had been too much occupied with his own thoughts to notice her before, but now he could scarcely restrain a start of surprise.

For Beatrice Griffith was no longer dressed as a widow, and, though in black, the dress was not one of mourning. The cap had disappeared, and in its place bunches of lilies-of-the-valley with their green leaves entwined with the heavy braid of her hair at the back of the head, and a slight string of the flowers above formed a delicate crown, touching the centre of the forehead, but raised from the temples. A string of the same wavy little bells surrounded her throat, and another her arms, which looked dazzlingly white against the lustrous black of her silk dress. The rich colour that burned in her cheeks made her still more striking, and the head that usually drooped was now erect and haughty.

Mortified and wounded, Beatrice fancied that she had found out a plot.

"Sidney knew that Mrs. Washburn was going to get Margie Willis here for him," she thought, "and so he no longer needs me. And—but could he deceive me so as to pretend he only wanted me to go for my own good? No, I will not blame him. It was the only way he could get rid of me."

But she mistook. If Mr. Griffith had plotted at all, it was in a very different way. The plan was entirely Mrs. Washburn's, who said to herself something like the following:

"I may as well pull wires, since I have nothing else to keep me from dying of *ennui*. Sidney shall take that little Willis, and she shall pay his debts. Beatrice shall go back and make up her quarrel with her uncle, and when nephew Tom comes home, if the Sioux, or Kickapoos, or whatever creatures he is wandering among, don't eat him up, he shall make love to her, and the uncle shall set them afloat. Then—well, if Mr. Langdon asks me—ahem! I am tired of Clarendon House, and during the long, tiresome winter evenings, when I am getting old and can't go out, it will be amusing to hear him talk. He is the dearest peppery old creature in the world. I could drive him frantic anytime. We should grow old and irritable, and Beatrice's and Tom's children would spring up about us, and finally cover us with leaves when we fall asleep like twopoor, foolish old children."

And Mrs. Washburn smiled, but at the same time wiped two tears from her bright black eyes, looking immediately after to see if they had left any stain on her lace pocket-handkerchief.

"Let me hope, Beatrice, that in putting off your sorrow you have not by mistake laid aside a friendship with it," said her brother-in-law, when they went back to the parlour; for she had scarcely noticed him during dinner.

She smiled with a tinge of bitterness.

"I am only learning to do without you," she said. "If my uncle receives the prodigal I must do so, and I may as well commence in time. You know it is said that we shall at last feel that which at first we only feign."

"Jealous," was his mental comment, and it gave him a feeling of relief; for a thrill of fear had passed through him lest she might have had some suspicion of the fate of her diamonds.

"To such shameful straits do poverty and those cursed creditors push me," he thought. "If I am ever fool enough to marry this little chatterbox I will give Beatrice a full diamond set the first opportunity."

We are not presenting Mr. Griffith as a model of virtue; but even unprincipled men like to justify themselves to themselves, and to think that they only stumble when circumstances put a stone in their path, and this gentleman was wholly convinced that, if he were a rich man, he would be the soul of honour.

CHAPTER IV.

Daughters sly and tall,
And curling and compliant.

MR. JAMES LANGDON sat alone in his parlour considering. That is he called it considering, and flattered himself that he was viewing a certain subject in all its bearings, and comparing pros and cons with strict impartiality. In truth, however, the elderly bachelor was, I am ashamed to say, indulging in the most absurd and rose-coloured day-dreams—visions of curls and smiles, flowing silks and lawn, blushes, tiny slippers, and the rest flitted in bewitching confusion before his gold-rimmed spectacles. Faint echoes of most musical laughter, of melting, coaxing tones, of flattering words, chased each other through his brain.

In fact, a change had been gradually coming over this gentleman.

Freedom was beginning to seem to him less enticing than a bondage such as he might assume; and, whereas in earlier life he had suspected every woman who looked at him of being actuated by mercenary motives, he now firmly believed that no less than half a dozen women were distractedly in love with him, and would gladly marry him even were he suddenly to become poor.

There was—well, no matter. We have nothing to do with the half-dozen names which the gentleman enumerated to himself—but there was Miss Jane Seymour, his housekeeper, not a common person, by any means, but a most excellent and accomplished lady.

Miss Seymour understood his ways, and appreciated his mind and manners, besides being distractedly in love with him.

And there was Miss Maggie Willis—and here, at the mature age of fifty-five, Mr. James Langdon actually blushed, and smiled in a manner that would have astonished Mrs. Washburn in the midst of her amusing wire pulling, and have broken the devoted housekeeper's heart, could those two ladies have known it.

A very commonplace sound interrupted the ancient lover's rose-coloured reverie, nothing more than the tea-bell which rang every evening so punctually at seven o'clock that the next-door neighbours used to regulate their time by it.

"Bless me! Where's Miss Seymour?" muttered the gentleman, rousing himself and pulling out his watch.

And as he spoke the door opened and she entered. A tall, slim lady, who might be something between thirty-five and fifty years of age.

She had a thin, lady-like face, which might have been a little shrewish, light flaxen curls, falling upon each side, and she was all grace and suppleness from the crown of her head to the toe of her trim, slenderness slipper.

She was a distant connection of Mr. Langdon's, whom she invariably called "cousin," and of far better blood.

Indeed, that gentleman rather looked up to her, and was proud of the connection. If there were a fault to be found in Miss Seymour, it was that she was too artificial, her very kindness being studied. Otherwise she might have been a pleasant, intelligent companion.

But the peer lady had gone through the bitter school of pride and poverty, and was scarcely to be blamed, the less so that the ardour she assumed was intended to be agreeable to others as well as protective to herself. It will not always do to show one's heart too openly.

"I would never dream of taking charge of any house but Cousin James's," she would say. "But I am very glad to be with him. It is no disgrace to be poor, though it certainly is an inconvenience."

This fair-haired lady now stopped on the threshold of Mr. Langdon's sitting-room and held up both hands with surprise, speaking in a voice which was very silvery though unnatural.

"Oh, you are in. I have been looking for you from the library window. When the bell rang I began to grow alarmed, and was going to speak to Charles."

"I thank you, Miss Seymour. I am quite well and safe," responded the gentleman, highly flattered. "I came in by the side door," and he bowed with unusual sauciness as he held the door open for her to pass into the dining-room.

She sailed past him like a swan, with a faint rustle of silk, and a faint odour of roses.

After all, she was an elegant woman, he thought, and so fond of him.

There was another person in the dining-room, a young man, who sat with a book in the bay window. He was a tall, large fellow, neither ugly nor handsome, with a pair of fine gray eyes, and looking nearer twenty-five than twenty, as he was.

This was Charles Blake, Mr. Langdon's new

protégé, who was practising law. A young man of respectable, but not conspicuous talent, rather quiet, sensible, and high-minded.

"A package was left at the door for you as I came in, uncle," he said; "and I took it. Here it is," giving him a little parcel.

Mr. Langdon took it, and broke the covering while Miss Seymour poured out the tea. First, a thick brown paper, then a smooth white one, then a tissue, and, inside these, a little ivory miniature in a gold frame, and a card, on which a few words were written:

"Uncle James, don't you ever want to see me again?"

Miss Seymour flushed and then paled, scalded her hand severely, by pouring tea over it instead of into the cup, when she saw the miniature case, and the change of Mr. Langdon's countenance when he looked at the picture and read the card. Well he knew the graceful writing, and the pictured face aroused a host of memories.

He had had that miniature of Beatrice painted the first season after her return from school, and he remembered now how she had made him kiss it when it came home, and then, pretending to be jealous of it, had sat on his knee and insisted on his kissing her twice to expiate. He remembered how she had pushed the iron-gray hair from his temples, and said that he had a forehead like Humboldt's. He could fancy the soft touch of her hands now, and the light pressure of her arm on his shoulder. He had loved that girl better than any other, as dearly as though she had been his own child, and, in spite of their estrangement, he had often longed to see her. "Poor little girl! Who knows what sorrows she may have undergone!" he thought, looking at the picture with tearful eyes, utterly forgetful of his tea and his companions.

"Mr. Langdon, will you have any tea?" asked Miss Seymour, with the faintest possible irritation in her voice.

He started and coloured again, annoyed at having displayed so much feeling, "I beg your pardon!" he said, hastily taking the tea. "I didn't see."

He put the miniature and card carefully into his pocket, and, without referring to them in any way, tried to appear as calm as usual, but with ill success. His heart had been stirred, and his vanity slept; and it was only his gallantry that made him polite to Miss Seymour. In reality she did not interest him, and he always felt a void in her society. Probably, if Beatrice had not left him, the idea of marriage would never have entered his mind.

But Miss Seymour was in no mood to be agreeable to her host. It was as much as she could do, to be civil to that man who sat opposite her with a woman's miniature in his pocket. How had he dared put it there before her eyes? Besides, her hand really smarted dreadfully.

"Did you scald your hand?" asked Mr. Langdon, at length arousing himself.

"Yes, sir," was the curt answer.

"Pray don't remain on our account," said the gentleman, kindly. "Get something to put on it. I would recommend butter and salt. That will prevent a blister."

Miss Seymour shrugged her shoulders at the vulgar remedy, and heroically sat on, hoping devoutly that her hand would blister in a manner, that would make Mr. Langdon consider himself a wretch. Charles Blake said nothing, but a smile that showed itself on his face told his appreciation of the state of affairs.

In spite of all advices and entreaties, the lady remained till supper was over, then went into the parlour and sat bathing her hand in rose-water, continually sighing. Charles Blake returned to his reading, and Mr. Langdon, finding himself deserted, took refuge in the evening paper. Had he comprehended the cause of the lady's ill-temper it is probable that he would have soothed her by explaining; but being too much absorbed he merely pretended to read, and in reality was thinking of and wondering all the time about his poor little Beatrice.

At length, finding that she was not likely to be enlightened, Miss Seymour rose, and after saying good-night withdrew to her sleepless pillow. No sooner had the door closed than Mr. Langdon dropped his paper. He wanted to talk to somebody, and took the one nearest at hand, having a liking for him moreover.

"I'm afraid poor little Beatrice is unhappy and homesick," he began.

Charles Blake looked up with a smile and look of pleasure that made his face almost handsome. He had never seen Beatrice, but little mementoes of her were all about the house—drawings, names, and lines in books, written in her light, graceful hand, bookmarks, cushions, the very pillow slips that she had embroidered. He had learned to invest this discarded niece with a halo of beauty and romance, and

it had got to be a sort of dream with him, that she would some time or other come back.

There was a fund of delicate and generous feeling and fancy in this young man's heart. He fancied among other things that he should never wish to see Beatrice, till she should step over the threshold that she had left in anger, and so, though often devoured by curiosity to see her, he had actually turned away his head when passing Clarendon House, lest he should see in some window a fair face which he should instantly know to be hers.

Pleased and encouraged by the attention and interest which the young man's face showed, his uncle drew forth the picture and the note, and displayed them. Warming with the subject, he then went over the whole story, described the lovely girl as he first saw her on his return from India, told all her ways, and a thousand anecdotes about the days of their happy union; then told also their estrangement, with many a bitter word for the Griffiths, especially for Sidney, whom he seemed to hate as the cause of his loss.

"He has a wily tongue, that fellow," he said, his colour rising and his eyes sparkling. "He made the match between Beatrice and his brother, hoping to get the handling of my property. If Beatrice hadn't been fascinated by him, she would never have married his brother. I told her so."

"Oh, uncle!" exclaimed the listener.

"It is true," was the testy reply.

"But how could you say so to her?" asked his nephew. "I can well suppose that such an accusation would have offended her past reconciliation."

"And so it did," Mr. Langdon said, colouring. "She never spoke to me again. Her anger proved the truth of what I said."

They sat in silence for a few minutes, then Blake spoke again.

"What do you mean to do, uncle?"

"I am going to-morrow to bring her home," was the decided reply.

The young man bent impulsively forward to grasp his uncle's hand.

"Thank you, uncle," he said, warmly. "That is the right thing to do."

"Why, Charles," began Mr. Langdon, then stopped because of a loud rattle of the door-bell. "What now?"

A servant entered and gave Mr. Langdon a letter. "Man waiting for an answer, sir," he said, as his master tore the envelope open.

It was a dainty little letter, scented, and written in so fine a hand that the gentleman had to look intently, even through his glasses, to make it out.

"DEAR MR. LANGDON," it said,—"Auntie and I, coming home just now, have discovered that Signor Rosie has sent us tickets for his benefit to-night. The overture can scarcely be over yet. Would not you like to go with us? We are waiting in our bonnets now, and if you will go, come along. We're not even going to change our gloves. This opera isn't full dress, and we have a box."

"Yours ever,"

"MARGARET WILLIS."

"Get my hat and cane, Tom, and have the carriage here in two minutes. Fly round! Tell the man—no, send him in here. You always blunder. You, Peter, what's-your-name? You brought the note. Give the ladies my compliments, and say that I will be there as soon as the horses are put to the carriage. I would answer the note if there were time. Get me a clean collar—no, this is fresh. Get me a clean handkerchief, and my opera-glass. Bring me the hat-brush. See if my boots want brushing. Bring me my dressing-case here. Put lavender on the handkerchief, Tom. There's a crease in my bosom, I believe. Tom, tell me if there is a crease in my bosom."

As he paused in suspense Tom set his head first on one side, then on the other, and opening his eyes to the fullest extent, took a solemn and critical survey.

"No, sir! No crease at all. Nothin' could be smoother. There is not a speck on it, sir. Carr'ge, sir!"

"Oh, is the carriage here at last? You get up behind, Tom. Charlie, will you ring and tell Jennie to attend to the door?"

If Mr. Langdon hadn't been in too much of a hurry, he might have glanced upstairs as he went out, and there seen a tall, white figure, gleaming through the banisters, and a pale face bending over. Poor Miss Seymour had risen from her bed to come out and see the meaning of the violent ringing, and running upstairs, and she beheld Mr. Langdon in light kid gloves, shaking a perfumed handkerchief as he hastened out to his carriage. Suspense is hard to bear, and the lady went and dressed herself to go downstairs again.

She found Charles Blake leaning back in his chair,

holding the ivory miniature and poring over the face, his own face glowing with a soft smile.

He blushed, and laid the picture down when she came in.

"What in the world is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing, only uncle got a late invitation to the opera," was his smiling answer.

"Dear me," she exclaimed, sinking into a chair near the table, and, glancing hurriedly at the note, which, in his haste, Mr. Langdon had left there, "I thought something had happened. I was so alarmed."

She looked at the picture in his hand, and forced a smile.

"Your lady-love?" she insinuated.

"Oh, it is Cousin Beatrice Griffith!" he said, blushing again, and offering the miniature to Miss Seymour. "Have you ever seen her?"

In her relief Miss Seymour took the picture with evident pleasure.

"Cousin James has gone to the opera with her?" she asked, sweetly.

"No. But she is coming home."

Miss Seymour coloured violently, and tears started in her eyes.

"Then you are *de trop*, Charles," she said, excitedly.

"Oh, no," he said, soothingly. "Uncle James will be always happy to have you here, I am sure. For myself, I do not need to stay."

"And I will not stay," she exclaimed. "Don't imagine that things would be the same. Everyone says that that girl always ruled him."

"I am glad my uncle is going to bring her back," said the young man, coldly, drawing himself up. "It is right. She has more claim on him than anyone else has."

Miss Seymour sat silent a moment, angrily twisting in her hand the note which she had taken from the table. Then she spoke again:

"I don't think he has treated me as a gentleman should. Here have I been with him a year and a half, and all that time have been a faithful friend to him, and he never tells me of this. He has told me every other particular and the runaway marriage she made, but he never tells me he has become reconciled to her and is going to bring her home."

Overcome by mortification, Miss Seymour concluded her complaint with a gush of tears.

"You make a mistake," said the young man, really pitying her. "He never heard from her till this evening, when she sent him this. He would have told you if you had not gone away."

Miss Seymour rose, still sobbing, and withdrew, carefully holding the twisted note, which presently she smoothed out and read in her own room.

"It is of no use! It is of no use!" she murmured, after she had read it, dropping her hands by her side, her face quite pale. "That girl has won him."

Meantime Mr. Langdon was driven rapidly to his lady-love, only stopping on the way to buy a bouquet. As the carriage stopped at Mrs. Willis's the door opened and a short lady came running down the steps, more slowly followed by an older lady and a young stripling, Mrs. Willis's son.

"I am so glad you happened to be in," cried Maggie Willis. "I was afraid you would be off somewhere. No, Phil and I are to sit on the front seat. I heard you say it made you dizzy to ride backwards. What beautiful flowers! Thank you. What pains you took, I'm sure. Now, Phil, you take notice how Mr. Langdon treats me, and when you grow up and want to please some lady you do likewise."

"Grow up!" growled Phil, in a boisterous manner. "Yes, grow up. You're a baby. Men never are men till they're forty at least. You are forty-five, are you not, Mr. Langdon? Fifty! is it possible? Well, some people never do grow old. There's Mrs. Washburn, if she'd wear a wig you'd think her no more than twenty-five. Now, I'm only twenty-two and I'm wrinkled. I saw two lines to-day as plain as can be between my two eyebrows, and when I laugh my eyes seem shrivelled."

And so they wended their way to the opera. There Mrs. Willis took her son's arm, and Mr. Langdon walked proudly up the stairs, supporting the gay chatterbox on his arm.

(To be continued.)

A YANKEE OPINION OF THE BRITISH FLEET.—

"The magnificent pageant at Spithead, the other day, was probably unsurpassed by anything in English naval annals, unless it be the famous Cherbourg review. Yet, perhaps, in the point of novelty it created less surprise, with all its splendour, than the solitary little war-vessel Miantonomoh, when she first steamed into the British Channel. It is to England's credit that, with all her faults in iron-clad construction, she was able to show so formidable a numerical array in her home squadron. Yet the very

excellence of one or two of her armoured ships is the condemnation of the rest. The excellent Bellerophon, for example, was a visible rebuke to the Warrior, Black Prince, Achilles, and Minotaur. She was nearly 3,000 tons smaller than they, and yet, by her ease of manœuvre and speed, far surpassed her four unwieldy sisters lumbering through the water in a helpless condition. The Bellerophon again carries the American principle of concentration of armour as far as it is ever likely to be carried in a broadside ship, protecting, as she does, only her water-line, and enough of her centre to carry six guns on each broadside. As to the Royal Sovereign, Capt. Cowper Coles's *chef-d'œuvre*, she amounts to nothing at all, for the meanest modern vessel of war extant is a high-sided turret ship. The turret and the low Monitor hull are correlatives, and to attempt to steal the one without the other is worse than to imitate neither. The Wyvern is one of Laird's steam-rams, built for the rebels, and not of much account; and the smaller craft, like the Viper, Vixen, and Waterwitch (pronounced, doubtless, by a good share of the spectators, Wiper, Wixen, and Watervitch") only add numbers without efficiency. But the Bellerophon is a formidable vessel, and condemns the rest by her presence."

SCIENCE.

PREVENTION OF CORROSION.—The best means of preventing corrosion of metals is to dip the articles first into a very dilute nitric acid, to immerse them afterwards in linseed oil, and to allow the excess of oil to drain off. By this process metals are effectually prevented from rust or oxidation.

PLATINUM AND STEEL ALLOY.—An alloy of platinum and steel has been formed, which possesses some peculiar properties. When these two metals are in a state of fusion they alloy in all the proportions tried. This alloy takes a fine polish, does not tarnish, and its pure colour peculiarly fits it for mirrors. Its density is 9.862.

FRENCH local papers give a curious account of the result of sinking an Artesian well in the Department of Ande, near Narbonne. When the depth of 180 ft. had been attained a stream of carburetted hydrogen gas rushed up the tube, which, being lighted, has continued to burn steadily with a red flame. Along with this gas water flows, which is stated to be extremely bitter and cold.

A CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE IN TELEGRAPHY.—A few weeks ago a couple of telegraph wires on the New York Central Railroad began to act very unreasonably. At ten o'clock in the morning they would "strike work" and resume at four in the afternoon. A careful examination of the line produced no result. The superintendent himself looked into the matter and saw nothing. It was a complete puzzle. An old Albany operator, however, was more successful. About sixty miles west of that city he found a point where the wires passed over the roof of a building, almost touching it. As the sun rose the wires fell, and at twelve o'clock they lay snugly together on the tin roof. As the sun fell they cooled and rose, and by four o'clock they were in their proper position. Of course the trouble was rectified.

INSPECTION OF WORKS AT MONT CENIS.—The French Imperial and the Italian Royal Commissioners had an official inspection of the works of the tunnel through the Mont Cenis on the 24th and 25th of July. Of the total length of the 12,220 metres, equal to seven and a half English miles and 235 yards, there were excavated on the 31st December last 3,900 metres on the Italian or Bardonecche side of the mountain, and 2,435 metres on the Modane or French side; total, 6,335 metres. Between the 1st of January and the 30th of June of the present year 774 metres were excavated, being the largest number by nearly 200 metres excavated in any one half-year since the commencement of the works in 1857. Of the 774 metres, 415 are on the Italian and 318 on the French side, making the total excavated at that date 7,109 metres.

REMARKABLE RAINFALL.—The rainfall which took place in the metropolis during the morning of the 26th July was very remarkable. In the meteorological record of Greenwich for the week, published in the Registrar-General's weekly return, it is stated that "on July 25th, at midnight, rain commenced falling heavily, and fell without cessation until 10 A.M. on the 26th. During these ten hours the rainfall amounted to 3.18 in.—an amount unprecedentedly large for this locality. At about forty minutes past 1 P.M. rain again began to fall, and fell more or less heavily till 10 P.M., giving an additional fall of 0.49 in., and a total fall for the day of 3.67 in.—a greater amount than has ever been recorded in twenty-four hours at the Royal Observatory. As far as can be at present ascertained, this

remarkable rainfall was confined to a radius of about 10 miles from Greenwich; it extended to Croydon, where it was 3.31 in." In any of the other towns of England furnishing returns, with the exception of Newcastle, the rainfall during the week did not amount to half an inch. In Newcastle the rainfall was 1.08 in.; and across the border in Edinburgh it amounted to 3.70 in., or nearly the same as at Greenwich, and in Glasgow to 2.09 in.

HALF A YEAR'S RAIN.—The variation in the quantity of rain in different parts of the kingdom is shown in the returns published by the Registrar-General. In the first half of the year 1867 20.5 inches of rain fell at Bristol, 20.1 at Glasgow, 18.2 at Sheffield, 15.5 at Birmingham, 15.4 at Salford, 14.1 at Manchester, 14 at Edinburgh, 13.1 at Dublin, 13 at Leeds, 12.6 at London, 10.1 at Liverpool, and only 8 at Newcastle.

TABLE ROCK AT NIAGARA.—The table rock at Niagara Falls was thrown down on the 25th of July. Several attempts had previously been made to blow it up, but unsuccessfully. On that day a blast was made, a charge of 200 lb. of powder being exploded. The extreme point was broken off, but the great mass of rock settled back to its position. A subsequent blast was fired for the purpose of completing the destruction.

INTERESTING DISCOVERY.—During the visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute to Selby the remains of one of the abbots were brought to light. Mr. E. Sharpe, of London, had desired the churchwardens to lay open the ground outside the south porch for the purpose of searching for any remains of the old Norman transept which were supposed to exist, and to which Mr. Sharpe had drawn attention in one of the sectional papers at Hull. The foundations were discovered, and at the same time, a wooden coffin containing a perfect skeleton. The wood was completely decayed and black. The coffin was about four feet below the surface, and upon it was laid a stone slab of about five or six feet long and eighteen inches in width. It was bordered by a dog-tooth moulding of the date of about 1220, and was inscribed lengthwise, the Roman letters giving the word "Alexander." The history of the church gave the name of an Abbot Alexander, appointed in 1214, and who resigned in 1221. Mr. Sharpe therefore supposed that this was the abbot who had built the work, which partook of lancet character.

ACTION OF LIGHT ON CHLOROFORM.—The chloroform used for the experiments had a specific gravity of 1.492 at 70 degrees Fahr., was absolutely free from acid reaction, and imparted no coloration whatever to sulphuric acid. The diluted chloroform was made of eight ounces of the former, by the addition of one fluid drachm of strong alcohol. The bottles used for the occasion were made of flint glass, of uniform size and shape, and filled alike. The experiments lasted one week during the hot days in August. It was concluded from these experiments:—1. That in order to preserve pure chloroform of specific gravity 1.49, it should be kept totally excluded from the light. 2. That to keep chloroform in the daylight it should be reduced in specific gravity by the addition of about two fluid drachms of 95 per cent. alcohol to one avoirdupois pound of chloroform, sp. gr. 1.492. During the repetition of some of these experiments attention was drawn to the presence of moisture in some of the bottles, and it was determined to try its effects on chloroform; accordingly chloroform of 1.492, dried by standing over chloride of calcium, was kept in absolutely dry bottles and in bottles slightly moist, and both kinds exposed to diffused daylight and direct sunlight. The bottle containing the moisture always showed the presence of free chlorine much sooner than the dry one, though the entire absence of moisture would not be sufficient to preserve the chloroform unaltered. But, if the chloroform had been reduced in specific gravity to 1.475 or less, the presence of several drops of water in the bottle would not induce the liberation of chlorine after an exposure of two weeks to the direct sunlight. For medicinal purposes—that is, for inhalation—this amount of alcohol would be unobjectionable, since it amounts in one fluid ounce only to about forty drops.—*Proc. Am. Pharm. Assoc.*

THE POPULATION OF LONDON.—A meeting assembled some time ago under the call of the Lord Mayor to consider the peril arising from the disappearance of commons and open spaces in the neighbourhood of the metropolis. Mr. Benjamin Scott, Chamberlain of the City, said that in dealing with the question they should not confine their calculations to 3,000,000 inhabitants. He found that in 1861 there were 3,322,711 persons living within an area of sixteen miles, taking Charing Cross as the centre. An increase of population has been going on within that area during the past half-century at

the rate of 19.6-10ths per cent. every ten years. In fifty years, at this rate, the population of the same area would be 8,532,000 souls. He found that in 1801 the people were twenty yards from each other, in 1851 about fourteen yards, and in 1866 something over nine yards. If this diminution of space went on for fifty years more, they would be more closely packed than his audience were at that moment—in fact there would be no standing-room for them.

FACETIE.

"So," said a young gentleman to a beautiful young lady at a party in Arkansas, "you won't take any of the sardines?" "No," said she, "but I'll take some of the greased minnows."

CANIVOROUS.—A schoolmaster "boarding round," recently received a note from a matron that she "would eat him but could not sleep him." He will be careful not to venture within her reach.

ADVANTAGE OF THE NEEDLE-GUN.—In time of peace the soldier has only to fire away at his torn clothes and they become whole again. An improvement on the sewing machine.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION.—A teacher of vocal music asked an old lady if her grandson had any ear for music? "Wa'al," said the old woman, "I raly don't know; won't you take the candle and see?"

"If," said an old fisherman, "I wanted to catch one simpleton, I would hook him with a bribe; if I wished to catch twenty, I would bait them with promises; if I desired to catch a hundred, I would poison them with flattery."

JUSTLY INDIGNANT.—A friend visiting an office for a servant had a Bridget pointed out to him. "What can you do?" he asked of the damsel. "I don't want to talk with a gentleman who asks such a question," was the indignant reply.

WORKING TOGETHER.—A contemporary remarking upon the recent invention in France of a wonderful cannon, which can be carried by two men, says:—"Just as one set of inventors is engaged in devising means of carrying maimed men out of the battle, another set is employed in improving the means of maiming and rendering them more portable."

BAD NEWS FOR UNMARRIED LADIES.—Among the new inventions is a button which is fastened to cloth without thread. It consists solely of a button with a wire, to be inserted into the cloth like a cork-screw and then pressed down flat, so as to form a ring to hold the button to its place. As this invention will enable men to keep the buttons on their shirts, it is calculated to do away with wives altogether.

An Irish journal, in describing a fight which took place in the streets of Cork, says that one of the belligerents, named Thomas Hurley, had lost his left eye, and it is said he lost it in the same way about six months ago, and in the same house where the row commenced. "A most extraordinary instance is this of the recuperative power of nature. We wonder if anywhere else besides in Ireland a man can be supplied by nature with a new eye in six months."

THE REASON.—A lady at the court of Vienna with whom an "Imperial Highness" danced three times on the same evening, flattered by his attention, frankly expressed her gratification at the compliment. "I did not intend it as a compliment," was the answer. "Then," said the lady, "your Highness must be very fond of dancing." "I detest dancing," was the unsatisfactory response. "What then, may I ask, can be your Imperial Highness's motive for dancing?" "Madam," was the exalted personage's curt reply, "my medical attendant advises me to perspire."

FEMALE LOGIC.—As a young woman was walking alone one evening, a man looked at her, and followed her. The young woman said, "Why do you follow me?" He answered, "Because I have fallen in love with you." The woman said, "Why are you in love with me? My sister is much handsomer; she is coming after me; go and make love to her." The man turned back and saw a woman with an ugly face; being greatly displeased he turned to the first woman and said, "Why did you tell me a falsehood?" The woman answered, "Neither did you speak the truth, for if you were really in love with me why did you leave me to look upon my sister?"

STRATEGY.—A young couple planned an elopement, the girl descending from her room upon the traditional ladder, but at the gate they were met by the father of the girl and a minister, by whom the young couple were escorted to the parlour, where, to their surprise, they found all their relatives collected for the marriage ceremonies, which took place at once. It was a neat paternal freak. Not near as neat as

that of a fond parent we know of. He heard his daughter and her lover plan an elopement. The next day the old man waited upon the young one and addressed him thus: "You're a fine, brave youth, and I don't object to you for a son-in-law. Here's a hundred to aid in the elopement. May you live happily in the same house, and may no accidents occur to throw the least shade on the sunshine of your life. All I request is, that you elope with my daughter—she's a nice girl, you know, but somehow her mother and I could never travel smoothly with her, we don't know her good points—elope with her to such a distance that she won't return to her loving father and mother any more. Good-bye, sonny, and may you be happy." There was an elopement that evening of one. The young man went unaccompanied. He thought everything couldn't be entirely right when the father was so anxious to get rid of the girl. The father looks upon his act as a very neat bit of strategy.

NEAPOLITAN HONESTY.

A certain lazzarone had a friend in the force, who protected him in all his escapades, and regularly shared his booty every week. It chanced that our vagabond friend took a spell of fishing, and for a fortnight did not appear on the Chiaja; the policeman naturally enough thought that the agreement between them was virtually broken, and when the lazzarone came back to his accustomed haunts took him into custody, ostensibly for some trifling fault, but really to show him that to a man of honour the laws of friendship are inviolable. The lesson was felt to be too severe, and the lazzarone, though he excused himself, promised a stricter attention to business, and was allowed to escape, nourishing vengeance in his heart. An opportunity soon presented itself; Captain S—, of the English navy, was pointed out to him by his friend of the police as a gentleman, the contents of whose pockets might be advantageously transferred to their joint possession. Away flew our lazzarone, and in a few minutes came back with a delicately perfumed and embroidered pocket-handkerchief.

"Is this all?" said the sbirro, in a tone of unspeakable disgust.

"That is all, Eccellenza," was the reply.

"What had he in the other pocket? no purse? no pocket-book?"

"The contents of the other pocket, Eccellenza, are mine, according to our agreement, and I shall take them by and by."

"No, no, my friend; remember that you owe me a fortnight's 'regulars.' I must have it all and have it at once too."

"If you insist it must be so."

The pickpocket went on his errand; the sbirro leaned against a post and watched.

The lazzarone slipped his hand into Captain S—'s pocket, but did it purposely with so little caution that the captain turned round and caught him in the act.

"Signor Capitano," said the vagabond, "have you lost anything?"

The captain felt.

"Yes; I have lost my handkerchief. No doubt you have it, and are now taking my pocket-book."

"Sir, if you will promise not to prosecute me I will get you back your handkerchief, and you shall punish the real culprit."

Captain S— knew Naples well enough to take the advice and the offer.

"You must let me steal your book."

"A pretty story. I am not quite so green as all that."

"Sir, you may follow me as close as you please, and seize on the man to whom I give the book, and on him will be found the handkerchief."

There was something honest—that is, for a pickpocket—about the man, and Captain S— determined to trust him.

Our friend gave the pocket-book to his sbirro; the captain seized the latter, and at once gave him into custody, while the lazzarone escaped.

The result may be imagined; the sbirro had a month's imprisonment, and when he came out he and the lazzarone were as cordial as ever, bearing no malice, and working together as amicably as before.—*Ferrybridge's Naples and Sicily among the Bourbons.*

A LABOURER while breaking stones on the roadside, having a shade over one eye as a guard, was thus accosted by a companion, "I say, Tummy, hast 'ee lost an eye?" "Why?" replied the other; "hast 'ee found one?"

INCREASING THEIR INCOME.—Everybody who has visited Paris knows the number of idle people constantly seen lounging about the streets; they are *petits rentiers*, vegetables with 250 dols. a year and under, who don't starve, but live in idleness. To eke out their miserable income they have taken to

collecting handbills and selling them for waste paper. At every corner of the great thoroughfares are people who distribute restaurants, ready-made clothing, and the like tradesmen's handbills. They are rather annoying, for they press their prospectuses upon you. The *petit rentier* has discovered waste-paper sells for four sous a pound, and two or three pounds a day add a good deal to his luxuries; some of them collect as much as five pounds of paper a day and find their income rise from 1,200f. to 1,565f. a year. They might make more by labour, but they prefer walking the streets for miles daily, for they see what is going on and are their own masters.

In 1796.—Josephine before consenting to marry Napoleon consulted her notary, Mons. Raguideau, upon the propriety of her marrying this soldier. The notary seriously opposed it. "It is madness," said he, "to marry an officer of fortune, and with no bright future before him." Napoleon heard from Josephine the notary's opinion. The day of Napoleon's coronation, and just before he set out for Notre Dame (he was arrayed in the coronation robes), he said, "Bring Raguideau to me." As soon as Napoleon saw the notary enter the Tuilleries he bawled to him, "Eh, Raguideau, do you still think I am a mere officer of fortune, with no bright future before me?"—Poor Raguideau began to tremble. Napoleon added, "I make you my family notary."

SERIALS AND CEREALS.

Literary Passenger.—"The serials are dull this month, sir, I think."

Agricultural Dillo.—"Well, cereals hev been, sir; but wuts are lookin' up this mornin'."—*Punch.*

A GENERAL ORDER.—If aides-de-camp as a rule are expected to obey the "hints" of the wives of their chiefs, like Sir William Mansfield's in India, the sooner aides decamp the better it will be for them.—*Punch.*

NOTICE OF QUESTION.—Mr. Whalley will interrupt the last act of the Reform drama to ask the Home Secretary whether he is aware that large coloured bills were posted all over London announcing that "a mass meeting" would be held in Hyde Park on the 5th inst.—*Punch.*

SHORTBREAD AT SALISBURY.—Eleven bakers at Salisbury were fined, the other day, for selling bread otherwise than by weight. There are two kinds of shortbread. One sort is the Scotch, the other, it may be feared, is the sort of bread that has been sold by those Salisbury bakers.—*Punch.*

ENVIALE OCCUPATION.—The Lord Chancellor has just appointed a gentleman of the legal profession a London Commissioner to administer oaths in Chancery. This employment must be considerably more lucrative than laborious. Oaths are at all times easily administered, and sometimes they are still more easily swallowed.—*Punch.*

VERY "POOR PLAYERS."—The "distinguished amateurs" announced that in consequence of their "great success" at the Holborn Theatre, their performances would be repeated at the St. James's. If this is their great success what must their failure be? Too awful to contemplate. We should like to see their salary list, and account of expenses for the two weeks. Blessed is the Beneficent Society if it expects nothing, assuredly it shall not be disappointed.—*Punch.*

OUR PROSPECTS.—We foresee the day when everything will be done by electricity. Clerks of the Houses of Lords and Commons will be telegraph clerks. Debates will be wired, and each telegraph desk will be a kind of alphabetical piano on which the speeches will be played, and by this means the charms of oratory will be intensified, and an instructive amusement will be provided for the Stranger's Gallery. The telegraph clerks will have to attend in place of the members, and every member will have his own private telegraph piano, except in cases of coalition. The sovereign of a hundred years hence will never open the House in person, but send his boots. The journals will contain all the news of the following day, and cheap evening papers will struggle to get two days ahead of them. Naval and military success will depend entirely upon respective electrical resources; and if nations ever should come to blows, the blows will be given in the air, for by that time we shall have balloons fitted with iron turrets and huge guns on swivels.—*"The Prophetic News."*—*Punch.*

HYGIA AND HYMEN.—Doctor Stark, the Scotch Registrar-General, has published a report containing some statistics by which he considers it to be proved "that bachelorhood is more destructive to life than the most unwholesome trades, or than residence in an unhealthy house or district where there has never been the most distant attempt at sanitary improvements of any kind." There are jolly bachelors who will be convinced by the extremely strong language

of this statement that Dr. Stark is stark mad on the subject of statistics. But it may be that he speaks the words of truth and sanity. The terrible destructiveness of bachelorship is easily accounted for. No cause more powerful tends to shorten life than excess in eating and drinking. Nobody can deny the proverb that what is enough for one is enough for two. It is still more certain that what is enough for two is too much for one. The generality of bachelors eat and drink as much as they can afford. When they marry they are obliged, for economy's sake, to share their meals with their wives. Hence, as husbands, they consume half the quantity that they ate and drank when they were single. Health and longevity result from the moderation of which the necessity is imposed on the great majority of men by marriage.—*Fun.*

THE LESS-ERPS SAID THE SOONEST MENED.—A gold medal has been awarded to M. de Lesseps by the jurors of the Paris Exhibition for his labours in the promotion of the Suez Canal. It seems but a scant compliment to England to confer this honour on one who is doing all he can to give the cut direct to India.—*Fun.*

"HERE WE GO, UP—UP—UP!"—It is reported that the present rage among our American cousins is for spending honeymoons in balloons. Whether husbands take their wives into the upper atmosphere in the hope of their becoming Borey-fied like the air, we cannot say, but we should think it probable that the only safe time for a married couple to go ballooning together must be the honeymoon. Later in wedded life such a trip might be dangerous, for there is always a chance of man and wife falling out.—*Fun.*

NOT QUITE SO BLACK AS THEY ARE PAINTED.—We believe there is no foundation for the report that the late Jamaica Committee has revived, and that it is taking steps to prosecute Lord Stanley if he takes any steps to persecute or threaten that amiable and Christian black, the Emperor of Abyssinia. We would, however, suggest that the gentlemen forming the committee in question, who were so hard upon Governor Eyre's policy, should be sent out to see what an easy task it is to deal with rebellious blacks. Now then, gentlemen of the Jamaica Committee, which of you will go as envoy to the benignant Theodoros? Don't all speak at once.—*Fun.*

STATISTICS.

DURING the month ending the 30th June last France and the Channel Islands exported to England, by way of Southampton, nearly 20,000,000 eggs, 14,000 bushels of fruit, 4,800 tons of potatoes, and 1,700 tons of butter.

REGISTRATION OF DOGS.—353,798 dogs were registered in Ireland in 1866, the first year of registration under the Act of 1865. 12,479 were registered in the Dublin police district. The licence duty received, at 2s. per dog, amounted to 85,879l. After deducting expenses, sums amounting together to 26,719l. were appropriated in the several counties and boroughs in aid of the local county and borough cess.

CANADA.—The new Confederation began its course, on the 1st ult., constituted of four provinces—Quebec (late Lower Canada, or Canada East), extending over 210,020 square miles; Ontario (late Upper Canada, or Canada West), 121,260 square miles; New Brunswick, 27,105 square miles; Nova Scotia, 18,660 square miles; making an area of 377,045 square miles. The population was 3,090,561 in 1861, and may now have reached about 3,800,000. At the census of 1861 the number of men capable of bearing arms (between the ages of twenty and sixty) was 653,567. The mercantile marine comprised, in 1865, 6,575 vessels of 943,533 tons, of the value of 32,844,069 dol.; a marine exceeded by only three States—the United Kingdom, the United States, and France. The imports amounted last year to 75,270,566 dol., the exports to 71,951,699 dol. The public debt of the Confederation amounts to 77,500,000 dol. The ordinary revenue in 1865 was 18,023,169 dol.; the ordinary expenditure 14,173,071 dol. If the Confederation should eventually include Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, the Hudson's Bay and North-West territories and British Columbia, the total area will amount to 3,369,300 square miles, and will exceed the whole territory of the United States.

BREWERS AND BEER.—A return was issued the other day showing "the number of persons in each of the several collections in the United Kingdom licensed as brewers, victuallers, to sell beer to be drunk on the premises and to sell beer not to be drunk on the premises, from 1st October, 1865, to

30th September, 1866, and the number of barrels of beer exported from the United Kingdom, and the declared value thereof and where exported to from 1st October, 1865, to 1st October, 1866, distinguishing England, Scotland, and Ireland, &c." The totals of this return show that there are 2,575 brewers, 44,607 selling beer to be drunk on the premises, and 3,063 not to be drunk on the premises. The malt consumed by each class is respectively 38,569,582 bushels, 8,594,803 bushels, 3,601,034 bushels, and 377,288 bushels. The beer exported from 1st October, 1865, to the same date 1866, was 70,040 barrels, the declared value of which was 2,023,483l.

A WREATH OF ROSES.

TELL me, sweet roses, white and red,
Who wove this garland for my head,
And what the fairest maidens said

To radiant wreath and bright bouquet.
Pray did they touch their lips to thine,
And tint thy cheeks, like ruby wine,
And whisper words of love divine,

Tell me, sweet roses, tell me pray?

The white rose bowed her pallid brow,
And from her mouth of fragrant snow,

In accents soft and sweet and low,
In syllables of balm she said:

"My sister rose, whose charms outblush
The cheek of beauty, on the bush
Leaned from her leaves to hear the thrush,
Whose song I fear has turned her head.

"When lo! a human form passed by,
With ruddy lip and starry eye,
And step as light as winds that sigh,
Like lover's when the heart's aglow.

These roses white and red were there,
Breathing their sweetness on the air,
She touched them with her lips so rare,
And with her hands as white as snow.

"My sister rose was snatched away;
I wept in dew-drops on the spray,
Until I met in this bouquet

The face that oft was pressed to mine.

And now my sister rose must tell,
How we came here, and what befell
The other flowers, while woman's spell
Entranced us like a thought divine."

A deeper crimson tinged the rose,
Her buds expanded into blows,
The lily whitened like the snows,

The timid larkspur shook with fear,
The sweet geranium, blushing red,
On the verberna leaned its head
Myrtles fit for a hero's blade

And flowers of every hue met here.

Then said the rose, with blushing cheeks,
"Flowers are soft words, that woman speaks,
And in the garden fair she seeks,

The language of her inner life.
The starry blossoms of the pinks,
And rose leaves, like the thought she thinks,
Enfold a heart of love that links
A sweetheart and a future wife."

G. W. B.

GEMS.

No books are so plain as the lives of men; no characters so legible as their moral conduct.

Be always frank and true; spurn every sort of affectation and disguise. Have the courage to confess your ignorance and awkwardness. Confide your faults and follies to but few.

To pardon those absurdities in ourselves which we cannot suffer in others is neither better nor worse than to be more willing to be fools ourselves than to have others so.

A WIFE'S love is the golden chain which unites her to her husband; it has a thousand delicate links, forged by sympathy, self-respect and mutual confidence; sever but one of them and the chain is as completely broken as though a hundred were destroyed.

AERONAUTISM IN FRANCE.—A little model of an aerial machine has been exhibited in France, which, by purely mechanical force, it is said, carries a mouse through the air. A sanguine and patriotic critic declares that France has thus solved the difficulty of aerial navigation, and that a machine proportionately large will raise an elephant easily.

DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT AMERICAN TOMB.—In Monroe county, Indiana, lately, as some workmen were digging a cellar they struck a block of stone, which disappeared with a dull thump. Investigation disclosed a chamber with a 6-ft. ceiling, and 18 ft.

by 25 ft. within the walls, which were of solid, neatly seamed stone-work. Ranged in rows, on rudely constructed platforms, were twelve skeletons, each with tomahawk and arrow-heads at their sides, ear-rings and bracelets of solid silver lying where they dropped, and piles of what appeared to have been furs, in the centre of the platform, each pile crumbling to dust as soon as exposed to the light. A number of tools, made of copper, and hardened equal to the best cast-steel, were also unearthed.

ELECTRICITY OF THE PRAIRIE.—I experienced, says Bayard Taylor in his "Colorado," three distinct electric shocks, probably from the fact that I was insulated by the india rubber cloth upon which I lay, and then touched the earth with my hand. On the snowy ranges persons are sometimes so charged that there are sparks and crackling sounds at every movement of their bodies. Men unacquainted with the phenomenon imagine that bees have gotten into their hair, and that rattlesnakes are at their heels. Many strange stories are told of the effect of the fluid, which seems to manifest itself in an eccentric but not a dangerous form.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HOW TO PREVENT ANTS FROM ATTACKING WALL-FRUIT.—Place a little guano at the foot of the wall-trees, and wash the wall over with some ammoniacal liquor from gas-works, and the ants will avoid the trees as if they were poison.

TO IMPROVE PENS.—When a pen has been used until it appears to be spoiled place it over a flame (a gaslight for instance) for, say, a quarter of a minute, then dip it into water, and it will be again fit for use. A new pen, which is found too hard to write with, will become softer by being thus heated.

PORTABLE GLUE.—Boil one pound of the best Russian glue, and strain. Then add half a pound of brown sugar, and boil thick. When cold, the compound may be poured into small moulds, and afterwards cut into pieces. This glue is very soluble in warm water, and is particularly useful to artists for fixing their drawing-paper to the board.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A PENALTY of £50 is to be imposed on persons buying, selling, or trading in silver plate without a licence.

HIS Majesty the Emperor of the French has forwarded to the treasurer of the Dover Sailors' Home a donation of two thousand francs.

THE total sum handed to the Pope as Peter's Pence by the French bishops is estimated at from 15 to 16 millions.

THE volcanic system of the Mediterranean has been for some little time in a state of considerable activity, giving indications of changes in the earth's surface.

THE NAVAL REVIEW.—The sound of the cannon-ading at Spithead was heard at Rose Hill, Exeter, 150 miles due west of Portsmouth, the wind at the time being westerly. They ought to pay their share of the treat.

IN Java the tiger has in one single year consumed exactly 148 human beings, and in another year 131. The crocodiles cleared an average of fifty people a year, while serpents accounted for between twenty-two and forty-three.

MAXIMILIAN'S BETRAYAL.—It is related of Lopez, the betrayer of Maximilian, that he once fell into an ambush with his men, and was retreating, when his horse fell wounded. One of the soldiers took him up behind him; but the speed of the horse being diminished by the weight, Lopez saved himself by shooting his preserver through the head, and rolled him out of the saddle.

THE FLORENTINE DIAMOND.—A commission was appointed to examine the celebrated "Florentine" diamond. Dr. Schrauf, of the Imperial Museum of Vienna, has pronounced that the correct weight of this stone is 133.160 Vienna carats—the Vienna carat is equal to 206.1300 milligrammes. In works on precious stones the weight of this diamond is given as 139½ carats.

THE RUSSIAN PRIESTHOOD.—The cure of souls in Russia has for centuries been hereditary. The son of a priest becomes a priest, or if he has only daughters the eldest conveys the parish to her husband. Of course the priest is as little of a pastor as is well possible, but he is much linked with the peasantry, and the Government, to improve the character and diminish the popularity of the priesthood, have abolished its hereditary character. Henceforward the best candidate is to be appointed.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
A LIFE AT STAKE ... 457	A CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE ... 477
SPANISH EGGS ... 460	IN TELEGRAPHY ... 477
THE ROYAL ACADEMY ... 460	TABLE ROCK AT NIAGARA ... 477
TURKISH BATH ... 460	ACTION OF LIGHT ON ... 477
CORONATION OF JAMES I. ... 460	THE POPULOUS ... 477
AUSTRALIAN LERCHES ... 461	THE POPULATION OF LON- ... 477
SWEET ROSES YANGLIED ... 461	DOSE ... 477
REVENANCE ... 464	FACTS ... 478
HEART HISTORIES ... 465	A WRATH OF ROSES ... 479
FRANKLIN ON RICHES ... 465	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES ... 479
NEW LAW OF AUCTIONS ... 465	GEMS ... 479
VIRGINIA ... 466	STATISTICS ... 479
ANTAS ATRE ... 469	MISCELLANEOUS ... 479
VAN DUZER ... 471	
THE ALEXANDRA ORPHAN- ... 473	
AGE FOR INFANTS ... 473	
THE ARRANGEMENT OF ... 474	
MAXIMILIAN ... 474	
ADULTERATION OF MILK ... 474	
FRANCE AND TURKEY ... 474	
THE WEB OF FATE ... 474	
A YANKEE OPINION OF ... 474	
THE BRITISH FLEET ... 477	
SCIENCE ... 477	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LOUISE.—The colour of your hair is light brown, approaching golden, fine and glossy.

A. G.—The founder of the Oratory was Philip de St. Neri; he was born in 1515, and died in 1595.

E. BERRY.—We make no charge for insertions in the correspondence columns of THE LONDON READER.

THE FISH CLUB.—We do not know the exact age of the gentleman you name. It is, however, without doubt, under 40.

HEBEL.—Fai or Fau is an old French word, meaning valley, as Faucis, closed valley; *Vaudable*, devil's valley; *Vauromy*, Roman valley.

LEON.—Sergeant-at-Arms, in legislative bodies, means an officer who executes the commands of the corps by preserving order and punishing offences.

AGATHA.—A good way to clean straw matting is to wash it well with a large coarse cloth dipped in salt and water, then wipe it thoroughly dry. The salt keeps it from turning yellow.

J. CLAY.—The best and simplest way to clean sponges is to wash them two or three times in cold water in which soda has been dissolved; squeeze all the water thoroughly from them, and then let them dry.

HUB HARDING.—Your handwriting is very clear and distinct, the letters being well formed; there is only one thing for you to acquire, a little more freedom, for at present it has the appearance of a schoolboy's writing.

E. G.—Water may be kept nearly as cold as lead water by surrounding the picher with several folds of coarse cotton kept constantly wet, the evaporation carries off the heat. In India and other tropical regions this is commonly done.

GROSVENOR.—We will give due consideration to any communication with which you may favour us. We can give no opinion without perusing the article or articles. All literary matter, if of sufficient merit, receives its *quid pro quo*.

J. BERRY.—You must pay the whole amount of the promissory note given by you in satisfaction of the arrears of rents due from your grandmother; you cannot claim any deduction by reason of your discovering an outstanding debt against the landlady.

MAGGIE.—A dairy should be conducted with the greatest regularity; every operation should be performed precisely at the proper time; either hastening or delaying the execution of it will cause cheese of an inferior quality to be made of milk from which the best might have been obtained.

PAUL.—In photography *diaphragm* or *stop* is a piece of metal inserted in the mounting of a lens, having a hole in its centre; when judiciously placed it gives more flatness of field, general sharpness, depth of definition, and width of angle of view, than could possibly be obtained without it.

T. TURNER.—The qualifications necessary for probationary purveyor's clerks are handwriting, orthography, arithmetic (including vulgar and decimal fractions), and English composition. For established purveyor's clerks—geography, history, translation from French, German, Italian, or Spanish, the selection being left to the candidate.

PAULINE.—For shredding cucumbers into very thin slices a small machine is used; it is made of wood, with a steel knife running across the centre. After the cucumber is pared and levelled it should be held upright, and worked backwards and forwards on the knife, bearing sufficiently hard to make an impression on the cucumber.

JULIE.—Examination by competition is now almost entirely the plan adopted through which a Government situation can be obtained. The mere pass is rarely resorted to, except in examinations for attachships and offices in the consulates. The system of competition has been twice affirmed by Resolutions of the House of Commons.

EVA.—To make raspberry vinegar, for every quart of raspberries allow a pound of loaf sugar, wash the fruit, and strew the sugar over; let it stand until the next day, keeping it well covered; then put the fruit in a linen bag and squeeze out the juice; to every pint of juice allow a quart of the best vinegar; bottle it, cork it tightly, and it will be ready in a few days.

GRETRUDE.—There is nothing so pleasing and lovely, or more capable of inspiring religious sentiments and faith, than to witness a young girl go forth from her past life, from her happy childhood, when she rambled over every field and meadow around her home; when a mother anticipated her wants and soothed her cares, when brothers and sisters grew from merry playmates into loving, trustful friends; from Christmas gatherings and festivities, or summer festivals in bower or garden, from the spots sanctified by the death of relatives, from all the scenes of her girlhood, and

enter upon the dark and mysterious future with a confident, undaunted mind, and lean her fair cheek upon her lover's breast, muttering, "I cannot see, but I believe; the past was beautiful, the future I can trust."

STEPHEN.—The fourth crusade took place in 1196 from France and Flanders; this was followed in 1198 by the 5th crusade from England. During this crusade the battle of Gisors took place, at which Richard Cœur de Lion caused the sentence "*Dieu et mon droit*" to be the password of the day; the words have been since continued as England's royal motto. The sixth crusade departed from Venice in 1298.

JUSTIN.—Scythe is derived from the Saxon word *sith*, and is an agricultural implement which has been known from the earliest ages. It consists of a curved steel blade fixed at right angles to a long crooked handle, to which are fastened two other smaller handles. Scythes are used for cutting grass and corn; when for the latter purpose a piece of wickerwork, called a cradle, is generally attached. Scythes were employed by the ancients as weapons of war.

PINK ROSE.—In England it is not customary for any lady, excepting she be the Queen Regent, to "propose" to a gentleman. Such a proposition coming from a lady of lower rank, the laws of social etiquette would mark as immodest in the extreme. If the "young man" to whom "Pink Rose" alludes has really any affection for her he will propose in due time. Hence, if "Pink Rose" has any self-respect, let her "bide her time." At eighteen years of age she surely must have patience.

LODE.—The term bleaching means something more than mere washing. To wash anything is simply to cleanse or free it from all such matters as may tend to sully it; but to bleach any material is not only to rid it of all extraneous dirt contracted in the process of manufacture, as well as the glutinous matter applied as dressing to the warp, but at the same time to discharge from its substance all the particles of colouring matter which have become incorporated with the fibres of the raw material, and by this means render it perfectly white.

I HAD A FRIEND.

An old oak-tree near our cottage stood,
And its sinewy arms were long and brown;
Through the leaves the wind sweet music made—
But the cruel woodman cut it down.

I watched a flower—at morn it raised
Its head to catch the sun's bright ray;
I sought its loveliness at eve,
To find it withered all away.

I learned a song, and carolled it
With joy (for I was happy then);
After years I tried the air,
But ne'er could sing that song again.

I had a friend—a cherished friend—
Given unto my happy youth;
But slender's venomous tongue assailed
The bond of friendship with its truth.

And shall it ever, ever be
That this life's treasure fade away?
Or shall faith's finger point above,
To joys that never can decay?

L. M.

POLLY AND SARAH.—"Polly," twenty-two, and "Sarah," nineteen; both dark. Trade not preferred.

M. A. L. thirty-two, tall, brown hair, gray eyes, and industrious. Respondent must be under forty, tall, and steady.

Minnie LINCOLN. twenty, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, and able to make a home happy.

LESLIE ALLEN. thirty, good looking, and fond of home. Respondent must be steady.

ERIE. twenty-one, 5 ft. in height, handsome, and will have a little money. Respondent must not be more than twenty-three or twenty-four.

HENRY S. twenty-nine, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, brown hair, whiskers and moustache. Respondent must be pretty amiable, and have money.

J. P. twenty-four, fair, light hair, whiskers and moustache, and a clerk. Respondent must be about twenty-one, good looking, domesticated, and have an income.

JOHN M. NEWPORT. nineteen, medium height, fair, and a tradesman. Respondent must be about eighteen, lively, domesticated, and a small income preferred.

ROLAND C. B. twenty, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, good looking, in a good situation, with prospects of advancement, and a total abstainer. Respondent must not be older than himself, with a kind and loving heart.

EVA AND ADA. "Eva," twenty-one, medium height, fair complexion, blue eyes, and dark hair. "Ada," twenty-one, rather stout, merry, and dark eyes. Respondents must be about twenty-five, steady, and industrious.

J. P. and J. S. "J. P.," twenty-two, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, dark hair and eyes, and good looking. "J. S.," twenty-two, 5 ft. 7 in. in height, dark hair and eyes; both seamen with good expectations. Respondents must be about eighteen or twenty-one.

ANNE, SARAH, and MATTIE. "Anne," twenty-one, medium height, and fair. "Sarah," twenty-one, medium height, and dark blue eyes. "Mattie," nineteen, tall, and dark hazel eyes. Respondents must be about twenty-three, tall, and respectable.

WM. E. forty-five, 5 ft. 10 in. in height, blue eyes, an abstinence, and a member of the Church of England. Respondent must be a Protestant, and between forty and fifty; one willing to go to Australia preferred, and possessing a little ready money.

LA SONNAMBULA and LONELY FANNY. "La Sonnambula," twenty-two, 5 ft. 2 in. in height, petite, fair, blue eyes, brown curling hair, and an amateur actress. Respondent must belong to a cavalry regiment; musician preferred. "Lonely Fanny," twenty, 5 ft. 1 in. in height, petite, light complexion, blue eyes, light brown hair, and industrious. Respondent must be a respectable seafaring man, or a professional.

LESLIE.—The Empress of Morocco is a native of Chaley, near Jura, where she was born on the 20th of November, 1820, in a small thatched cottage. Her name was Virginie Lanterner. She accompanied her parents in 1834 to Algeria, and the whole family were taken prisoners. Her father was killed, and her mother died a short time afterwards. The captors, dazzled by the great beauty of Virginie, spared her,

and by a concurrence of romantic circumstances, the emperor's son fell in love with her, and she became his wife; she has since sought out and taken her three sisters to the same court, to which they are now attached.

ROSE ST. C.—We shrewdly suspect that your engagement is clandestine, otherwise your lover would not be so exigent. If you deem him worthy of your love act according to his reasonable wishes, if not, discard him at once; but stern however as you may deem your father, you would best consult your future happiness by consulting him. Clandestine marriages are seldom productive of true happiness. You know there is an old proverb, "To marry in haste is to repent at leisure."

G. M.—Bunions may be checked in their early development by binding the joint with adhesive plaster and keeping it on as long as any uneasiness is felt; the bandaging should be perfect, and it would be as well to extend it round the foot. An inflamed bunion should be poulticed and larger shoes worn. An excellent ointment for bunions may be made by taking 12 grains of iodine and 4 oz. of spermaceti or lard, and mix well together. It should be rubbed on gently twice or thrice a day; on no account have tight-fitting shoes, slippers, or boots.

ENDOR.—Non-commissioned officers in the French army are not often reduced to the ranks, although the colonel of the regiment has power to do so; they are generally punished by confinement to barracks or arrest in their own quarters; or, if on active service, in the towns which serve as the *Salle de Police*. For dishonesty or insubordination they are always tried by a court-martial; but crime is rare amongst them. Sometimes many of them, being young men, indulge too freely in wine, but if not on duty and the offence not repeated, they are let off with a reprimand or a few days' arrest.

HICOR.—To obviate the danger which in many cases has been found to attend the use of leaden pipes, and at the same time to secure the cheapness and good quality of the lead, a very simple mode of forming pipes consisting externally of lead, but internally of a thin coating of tin, may be effected by both being firmly united together, the relative thickness of the metal being such that when the lead is drawn to the proper length the coating of tin will be of the requisite thickness. The tin, which very slightly augments the cost of production, will remain entire, however thin the pipe may be, if ordinary care be taken.

MAURICE.—The ground now occupied by Westminster Abbey was the site chosen by Sibt, King of Essex, for the erection of a Christian Church; previously the Romans had raised a temple to Apollo there similar to the one they erected to Diana on the top of Lud's Hill. Sibt had churches reared on both sites, the one on Lud's Hill was called the *East Minster*; that on the low spot on the left bank of the Thames, called Thorney Island from its thorns and breaks, was called the *West Minster*. This church and abbey was entirely rebuilt by Edward the Confessor, who was present at its consecration in 1068.

FOREY.—"What Cheer," by F. F., though prettily conceived, is incorrect in metre, therefore unsuitable for our columns; but be not discouraged, try again, and again, if necessary.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

E. K. is responded to by—"Lizzie," fair, with an annuity of 40l.

CLAUDE MELNOTTE by—"Fanny," well educated and thoroughly domesticated.

N. W. by—"Sophia Clara," fair, a Protestant, but no money.

THE OFFICER by—"Sarah," who thinks she would suit him.

HERBERT STANLEY by—"Maude Carlton," eighteen, medium height, golden hair, and blue eyes.

MEDICUS by—"Carrie," seventeen, 5 ft. 8 in., fair, brown hair, and dark blue eyes.

WILLIAM W. by—"B. L.," twenty-three, tall, fair, and good tempered.

DOMESTIC HARRY by—"E. M.," twenty-six, medium height, dark hair and eyes; and—"M. H.," twenty-four, tall and dark.

GEORGE DEIGHTON by—"Kate," twenty-two, domesticated, but has no money. (Handwriting good and legible.)

AGNES by—"A. U.," twenty, dark, and in the theatrical profession.

Minnie G. M. by—"John James," forty-three, 6 ft., and in a good situation with a salary of 130l. per annum.

ROSE by—"J. Moore," (Derbyshire), nineteen, tall, dark, and will have an income when of age.

LEAH MORTIMER by—"Sailor," twenty-three, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, dark, in the Royal Navy, a total abstainer, and fond of home; and—"A. P. McCaution," twenty-one, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, and black hair.

IDA and EVA by—"Reginald" and "Oliver" (brothers and midshipmen). "Reginald," nineteen, 5 ft. 9 in., dark, hazel eyes, and 500l. a year. "Oliver," eighteen, 5 ft. 10 in., dark blue eyes, 200l. per annum, and 6,000l. when of age.

F. H. W. (Leicesterhire) by—"Orlando," six years her senior, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, fair, an abstainer, of moral and religious principles, a clerk, with moderate but increasing salary, and a sum of money in the bank.

FRANCES (a widow) by—"A. R. T." (a widower), forty-four, an abstainer, and in business.

ERVINOR VINTHIER by—"Jacques," who has 500l. a year, and in a good business.

PART LII, FOR SEPTEMBER, IS NOW READY. PRICE 6d.

*. Now Ready, VOL. VIII. OF THE LONDON READER. Price 4s. 6d.

Also, the TITLE and INDEX to VOL. VIII. Price ONE PENNY.

Nos. 2 and 9 OF THE LONDON READER HAVE BEEN REPRINTED.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Printed and Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. WATSON.